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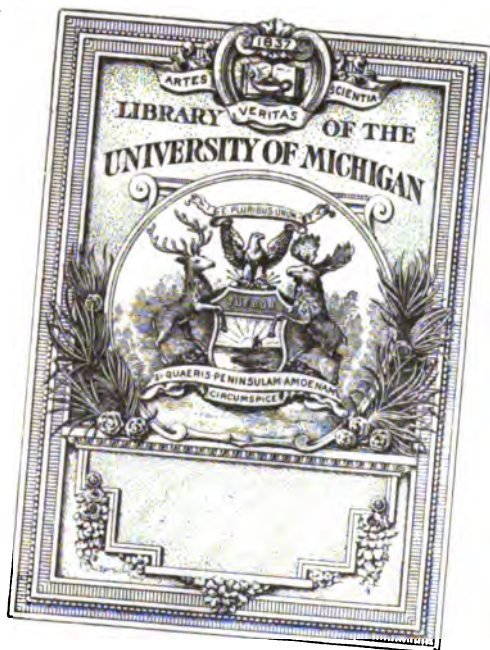
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BELGRAVIA

MAY, 1898.

St. Philip's-on-the-Sea: a Novel.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT LIVERMOOR CASTLE.

THE Honourable Mrs. Berrington was not deriving the unmixed joy which she had confidently expected in her sojourn in the gilded magnificence of her noble connection's castle. 'Tis true that the reality amply justified her dreams in one particular, for Livermoor Castle she found to be a very splendid abode indeed; the Castle itself, with its long rows of columns, its huge gleaming white frontage, and its luxurious internal arrangements, left nothing to be desired, while the wide views over the vast expanse of the Park, with its wonderful clumps of ancient trees, gave Mrs. Berrington a keen sense of delight, as she thought that all this luxury of house, grounds, retinue, and equipage would one day be—if not hers, as she had once fondly hoped—at any rate, and what was almost the same, her daughter's. The easy terms upon which she was received by her relatives, the Wrenfords, also filled her with joy; for those keen-eyed folk had seen which way the wind was blowing, and the mother of the future Countess of Livermoor, was, in their estimation, a very different person from the needy hanger-on at the Wrenford skirts—the widow of the disgraceful John; and Mrs. Berrington, consequently,

found herself treated by these exalted relatives with a distinction which was as pleasant as it was strange and unaccustomed. In this balmy atmosphere, the widow expanded in a marvellous manner; she developed conversational powers which astonished her daughter, and she accepted the position of the honoured guest of the wealthy Peer, with the grace and well-accustomed ease of one to the manner born. Moreover, she was positively renewing her youth in this congenial air, and Maud was quite touched to think of how easily her mother could be turned from a despondent, and an almost hopeless woman, into a lively, merry, pleasant body, full of the most animated spirits. Poor Maud sighed to think of the poverty of the land to which they must soon return, not so much because she dreaded the burden, as because the contrast, the glaring contrast, between the shabby gentility of Woodville, and the chastened magnificence and luxuriant comfort of Livermoor Castle, would, she knew only too well, be a text upon which her mother would dilate with a painful and constant prolixity; for Mrs. Berrington believed in the truth of that proverb which speaks of the frequent dropping which wears away the stone, and before now she had often conquered Maud's opposition to some cherished plan of hers by constantly, in season and out of season, harping upon the same string, until from very weariness, and for peace and comfort's sake, poor Maud had been forced to give in. No, Mrs. Berrington, though basking in all this sunshine, was not altogether content. It is true Lord Livermoor was everything—except a lover—to her that she could wish; he was, also, devoted in his attentions to Maud; there was no apprehension in that direction; but, alas, there was always a creeping, omnipresent feeling of uncertainty about it all. Those devoted attentions of Lord Livermoor's! if they had only been showered upon *her*! But the misguided Peer refused to see the evident suitability of an alliance with the well-preserved and still pretty widow; he turned his back upon all her little charms and graces, and persisted in bestowing his devotion upon the person of her daughter, who—and

this was the serpent in the widow's paradise—received these devotions with an indifference, which occasionally surged up into positive dislike and scarcely hidden disgust.

"What on earth does it all mean?" asked Lord Wrenford of his lady in the sanctity of their own suite of rooms at the Castle. "Hanged if I know what Livermoor is up to! Does he mean to marry the girl—deuced nice-looking girl, too—or don't he?"

"Really, Charles, your language is most peculiar," said Lady Wrenford; and, indeed, the iniquity of the Honourable John was faintly reflected in the noble brother of that lamented one, for the Wrenfords had always been a fast lot.

"Oh, hang the language!"—only he said something stronger than "hang." "Beg pardon, my lady, it slipped out, couldn't help it, I assure you; you're so deuced particular, you know; so's old Livermoor. Look here! I shall be most infernally glad when this job is over, it's positive torture to me to have to talk to him."

"We are under obligations to Lord Livermoor, and you must put up with it," said Lady Wrenford coldly; and it is a fact that their wealthy relative had "come down" handsomely enough on more than one occasion.

"You need not remind me of that, Emily; anyway, I suppose we are asked here to assist at a friendly arrangement, and the sooner it is announced and settled, and we are at liberty to go, the better I shall like it."

"I don't believe it ever will be settled, as you call it," said Lady Wrenford.

"What! you don't mean to say you think the old rip is going to cry off after bringing the girl and her mother down here; to say nothing of boring me to extinction!"

"I don't think he will get the chance, Charles," said her ladyship.

"What on earth do you mean?" asked Lord Wrenford.

"Why I don't believe the girl will accept him."

"Pooh! Never heard such nonsense in my life; why, she'll jump out of her skin to get him, any girl would;

and they're as poor as church mice, as I know well enough. Look at the position!"

"Still, I think I am right; I have watched the girl carefully, and I believe she loathes him; she shrinks away from him whenever he comes near her, and turns from him when he speaks, and she scarcely ever speaks to him; she hates him. I believe there is some one else in the way."

"Oh! that don't matter, they all hate 'em as far as that goes, and she can easily console herself with 'someone else' when she's Lady Livermoor."

"Charles, I will *not* listen to you when you speak in that way," and Lady Wrenford wrathfully sailed out of the room.

His Lordship of Livermoor, himself, was not at all satisfied with the pace at which his courtship of the lovely Maud was going, in fact he was beginning to own to himself that the progress was in a backward rather than in a forward direction, and all this made him very uncomfortable in his mind. Some drawing back, though merely for form's sake, he had expected, and, to tell the truth, he had looked upon Maud's obvious discouragement of his amatory advances at St. Philip's as being artful incentives towards drawing him still further into the toils—the devices, probably, of that old campaigner, the girl's mother; and he had confidently expected that once confronted with the luxury and evident wealth of Livermoor Castle, Maud would very soon give up all these airs and graces, and succumb, a willing victim, if not to the personal charms of the owner of all this rank and wealth, at any rate to the rank and wealth themselves. His reception of Maud had been most *impressé*; he had himself driven to the station to meet his guests, and had conducted them to his magnificent home in something like triumph; for it never entered into his mind—any more than it had entered into his relative Lord Wrenford's mind—that any woman would be such an idiot as to refuse all that he had to offer, even though that all, as Lord Wrenford thought, were accompanied with the necessary and unavoidable adjunct of the full-

blown and aging Peer himself. It is, however, quite unnecessary to say that this was only Lord Wrenford's opinion, and was by no means shared in by his noble relative himself, for he had for so long lived in an atmosphere of adulation as to have the very highest opinion of himself, save perhaps, and that very occasionally, when some dim suspicion—instantly dismissed, the low intruder!—arose in his mind as to whether he was quite as good and great a man as he imagined himself to be. This being the case, he quite thought that the young lady he distinguished with his attentions would be proud and pleased to enter into an alliance with him, and that apart from all the other advantages accruing to her from such a match. His fifty-nine or sixty years was not a particularly heavy burden to him, and he regarded his age in a widely different light from that in which the youthful Maud was likely to regard it, for he felt strong and well and likely to last out a great many of the young men of the Johnnie, and Chappie Masher, order.

Still, in spite of all these consoling and fortifying self-communings, it was evident enough to Lord Livermoor that the girl was not impressed as he had hoped she would have been; and, though he greatly disliked the idea, he made up his mind to take the mother to task, and ask her whether her daughter's affections were really disengaged. For Lord Livermoor was beginning to suspect with that astute diviner Lady Wrenford that there must be someone else, and in that case he made up his mind to give up the game matrimonial; for vigorous as he felt himself to be, he was old enough to detest the idea of anything like a contest in such a matter.

An opportunity for a *tête-à-tête* interview with Mrs. Berrington presented itself one evening as the visit drew towards an end. It was a lovely night, and after dinner Lady Wrenford had persuaded Maud to stroll out in the Park—persuaded because Maud avoided sedulously the “pumping,” with which an interview with Lady Wrenford began, continued, and ended. Mrs. Berrington was, then, above in the drawing room, when Lord Livermoor

came in from his wine. Lord Wrenford was an inveterate smoker, and as his noble host abominated the fragrant weed, he strolled out in his turn to enjoy a cigar in the balmy evening air. Thus, to Mrs. Berrington's trepidation, a comfortable interval was provided by fortune, in which the *prétendant* and his would-be mother-in-law could discuss their interesting affairs secure from interruption. This, however, as we hinted above, was anything but a joyful prospect to Mrs. Berrington, for she saw an understanding of some sort or another must be come to soon, and she had occupied much time and considerable ingenuity in seeking for some means whereby she might stave off the evil day. No plan, however, could she hit upon, and here, in spite of all her avoidance of such meetings, was she, at last, brought to bay and forced to trust to the chapter of accidents to assist her. As to what Maud meant to do in the event of a proposal from Lord Livermoor, Maud's mother had no manner of doubt. She would not speak openly to her daughter on the subject for fear of getting a downright answer, which would make it only the more difficult for her high and lofty plans for the girl's future. No, it was better to have no open discussion on the delicate topic; but she could hint and insinuate, and these crafty advances of hers met with a reception on Maud's part which argued unpleasantly for the plans afore-mentioned. No wonder, then, that she flushed a rosy red as the door opened and my lord appeared in solitary splendour. Occupied as his mind was with the weighty matters of the coming interview, Lord Livermoor, who—strictly secretly, be it said—regarded himself as something of a connoisseur in feminine loveliness, did not fail to remark the rosy flush and the air of youth which the said flush imparted to Mrs. Berrington's comely features. "Never knew the mother was so nice-looking," he said to himself.

"What! all alone, Mrs. Berrington?" he said aloud, "and where then are your charming daughter and Lady Wrenford?"

"They are in the Park; such a lovely evening, you know. I was almost tempted to accompany them,

but I thought you would like to find someone in the drawing room when you should come in."

"How good of you, Mrs. Berrington," said the Peer, sitting on the sofa beside her and taking her hand—for he was very fond of holding the hands of fair females in his own large but shapely paw. "I am delighted to find you alone, too; it is almost providential. I want to speak to you about our dear Maud," and Lord Livermoor paused and looked earnestly at the widow.

"Yes?" said the lady, with a dismal sense that now was the tug-of-war. "You will, of course, remember my letter?"

"Oh, yes; such a nice letter, Lord Livermoor," answered the widow with a grateful look into her host's large and rubicund visage. "I am often recalling it."

"And what, then, do you really think of the subject of that letter, my dear madam?" asked the writer of the epistle in question.

"I am, as I told you in return, delighted and proud to think you have so high an opinion of, and such generous wishes towards, my daughter," answered Mrs. Berrington, fencing with what she very well knew to be the real object of her companion's enquiry.

"Ah, yes," said Lord Livermoor with a keen look at her; "but is there—do you think, now, that—in short, have you sounded Maud as to her intentions in a matter in which my—and her, I trust—happiness is so largely involved?"

"I am sure, Lord Livermoor, any girl would be proud and happy to minister to your happiness. What could be a greater privilege than to—to be the loving companion of such a philanthropist?" And the widow sighed in a way which, had his thoughts not been pre-occupied, would have told that philanthropist, plainly enough, that if Maud proved recalcitrant and ungrateful, he would not have to go out of the family for consolation.

"Now, I have watched her very carefully," said Lord Livermoor, ignoring, and, indeed, scarcely hearing Mrs. Berrington's last pathetic remark and talking to himself, "and I cannot say I am satisfied with the result of my

observation. . There is a shrinking, a——an avoidance which occasionally makes me distrust——which makes me suspect——In short, Mrs. Berrington," he said, turning round shortly on the widow, "is there anyone else?"

Though very much startled at the manner of the question, and at the question itself, Mrs. Berrington was relieved at its tenor, and she hastened to allay her companion's jealous fears, and to assure him that he had no rival.

"I can most truthfully reassure you on that point, Lord Livermoor," she said. "Maud would scarcely—for she is my only child, and we are very fond of each other—she would scarcely have kept anything of that sort from her mother, and I can assure you that she has never breathed a single word to me which would hint at such a state of things. No, I am quite certain there is no one else."

"You delight me ; I am charmed to hear it," said Lord Livermoor ; "but why——" And he thought for a moment over the evident avoidance with which Maud treated him, and which he saw only too plainly. "Now, Mrs. Berrington," he went on briskly and decidedly, "I want to ask your advice. Do you think I had better speak to our dear Maud at once, or would you advise any further delay? So far as I am concerned, the suspense is difficult to bear, and I had rather learn my fate at once ; but still I know there is a certain disparity in our ages, and it is possible—— But tell me, what think you on the matter?"

Now was Mrs. Berrington halting between two opinions, and placed in a cruel quandary. If, on the one hand, she advised the fond lover to declare himself at once, his declaration, she feared, was not unlikely to meet with a prompt and decided refusal ; and if she advised delay it was, on the other hand, not at all improbable that Lord Livermoor might tire of what was, after all, a very sudden attachment, and one which might prove as evanescent as it was sudden.

However, here was his lordship looking at her intently, and waiting for a reply. Something she *must* say ; and,

as she was tolerably certain of Maud's rejection of her noble suitor's offer at this present conjuncture, and as there was, at any rate, an element of probability in his lordship's constancy, and, moreover, time to be gained—time which might have all sorts of possibilities in store—she made up her mind to risk the delay as the better course of the two.

"I think, perhaps, dear Lord Livermoor," she said at last, with an insinuating smile, "dear Maud is so very young—almost a child—I think that, on the whole, don't you know, we had better give the dear girl an opportunity to—to become accustomed to the idea of such a change in her condition. I feel certain you need have no fear as to the result" (Oh, fie! Mrs. Berrington!); "but your acquaintance has been but a short one, don't you think? and there has, as yet, scarcely been time enough for it to ripen into—er——"

"Yes, yes," said Lord Livermoor, "I suppose you are right, and I had better wait a little longer, though the delay is most irksome to me. I will come down to St. Philip's on-the Sea shortly if you will permit me, and in the meantime——"

"In the meantime, Lord Livermoor, you may rest assured that you have a friend at court in me, and that I will do my very best for you with dear Maud."

Here the voices of that young lady and her companion, Lady Wrenford, broke up the conference, to Mrs. Berrington's intense relief, and on the morrow the mother and daughter bade farewell to their host with mutual feelings of content; for, if Mrs. Berrington was delighted at having succeeded in keeping the game matrimonial alive, Maud was charmed to have escaped from an interview she now dreaded. "Out of sight, out of mind" was a comforting proverb for once, and she hoped Lord Livermoor would soon forget his absurd infatuation.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAUGHT!

WHEN Dolly Lamley arrived at the gate of the paternal mansion, on his return from his walk with Coleson, he found that there yet wanted an hour until the time when that tocsin of the soul, the dinner-bell, should sound. Taking out his pouch to make himself a cigarette, he discovered that his stock of "Turkish" was getting alarmingly low, so he accompanied his friend to Pine Cottage, and, bidding him farewell at the gate of that diminutive habitation, he strolled on to the town to replenish his stock of tobacco. Having done this, he made a *détour*, and walked back through the little park, the scene of his eventful interview with the fair Mary. He was, naturally, thinking of his beloved as he slowly walked through the little umbrageous demesne, and pondering over Coleson's advice, acknowledging to himself the justice of that advice, and wondering how he should make the necessary avowal of his engagement palatable to his father.

As he drew near to the seat which had witnessed his and Mary's mutual confessions of love, he was astonished and delighted to see Mary herself ensconced thereupon. Mary, in her turn, was deeply engaged in thought as to the uncomfortable attitude of concealment in which she found herself, and the evident uneasiness of her parents on her behalf. She was looking down, and aimlessly tracing figures on the gravel with the point of her parasol, and she did not hear her lover's approach as he walked towards her over the grass.

"Dolly!" she exclaimed, as he came up. "You here!"

"And why not, mademoiselle?" said Dolly, sitting down beside her and taking her hand. "Your reception is not too enthusiastic; you don't seem particularly glad to see me," he added, in a hurt tone.

"Oh, Dolly, it is all so miserable!" was the next remark the young lady vouchsafed him.

"I must say you are not too effusive, Mary. And what, pray, is all so miserable?" asked Dolly, who had, nevertheless, a very shrewd suspicion as to the cause of Mary's woeful words.

"Do not be angry with me," she said, looking at him with a piteous appeal in the soft brown eyes. "Father and mother are so good and kind to me, and it seems so wrong to keep everything from them. I am sure they suspect something, and I cannot tell you how wretched it makes me to have to pretend that there is nothing the matter, and that things are just as they were."

"Yes, darling, I know it is hard, and I cannot bear to see my dear little Mary unhappy. I have been thinking it all over, and, after all, there is no use in making a mystery of it all. I shall speak to your father at once——"

"I *am* so glad, Dolly," interrupted Mary, joyfully; "but—but, of course, father will go to Mr. Lamley about it, and I am dreadfully afraid of what he will say."

"Never mind, Mary, I shall be true to you, and if you are true to me—as I know you will be true—it will all come right in the end," said Dolly with a dismal foreboding in his mind that it would be a considerable time before it *did* all come right, and that the end was a very long way off.

It was unfortunate that Mr. Waddell, who was very uneasy in his mind about Mary, should have found it necessary to allow himself a short time of solitary self-communing as to how he should address his daughter on the delicate subject his father-in-law's, and now his own, suspicions pointed at; and it was still more unfortunate that the little Park should have presented itself to his mind, as a quiet place where he was tolerably certain of an opportunity to indulge in these mental exercisings free from disturbance. Certain it is that as the pair of lovers were deeply engrossed in their consultation as to the when and the how of Dolly's approaching manifesto, one of the persons to be addressed was slowly drawing near

the part of the Park where the two were seated, and in close and lover-like contiguity too. It may readily be believed that Mr. Waddell's slow and measured pace was considerably accelerated as the pretty picture the unconscious lovers made met his astonished view.

"Mary!" he exclaimed, hastily coming up to them, "Mary! Why, what does this mean? I thought you were ill in your room, and I find you here with——And you, sir," he broke off, angrily addressing the much confused Dolly, "what does all this mean, sir? I insist upon an explanation!"

Both Mary and Dolly had started to their feet as the sound of Mr. Waddell's voice roused them from their self-absorption, and they stood before him the very incarnations of confusion. It was all so sudden and unexpected, they were so flagrantly caught at unawares, that for a moment they stared at the angry father in speechless dismay. It was Mary who first recovered her scattered senses to some small degree.

"Oh, father!" she cried, looking beseechingly at him, and with a very red face, in which she was countenanced by the ingenuous Dolly whose own colour was considerably heightened, "I did not mean—we neither of us meant to keep it all from you any longer; Dolly was going——"

"Dolly!" interrupted her father. "Who is Dolly, pray? And why do you refuse to answer my question, sir? I find you here alone with my daughter, sir, and you were seen with her on the Pier. Will you permit me to ask you what it all means?"

"It means, Mr. Waddell," said Dolly, who had by now regained his composure, "it means that Mary and I love each other——"

"Good Heavens! You don't say so," interrupted the Mayor with an angry sneer. "And you, Miss, you shall answer to me and to your mother for your deceit—ill! forsooth! Your grandfather was right; it is time you were looked after, indeed. I am thankful I have discovered this pretty little plot—pray, how long has this been going on? But, at any rate, it shall be stopped at

once ; I will have no playing fast and loose in my family, and I insist, sir, that you cease your—your unwelcome attentions from this moment.”

And Mr. Waddell resolutely tucked his daughter's hand under his arm, and marched off in a terrible state of indignation.

“Stay, sir,” cried Dolly in despair, following after the Mayor, and cutting, it must be confessed, a somewhat ridiculous figure, “I insist, in my turn, that at least you listen to what I and your daughter also have to say in the matter.”

By this time poor Mary was in tears, and the Mayor had to pause for a moment as she withdrew her hand from his arm to wipe away these grievous signs.

“Indeed, indeed, father, he meant to tell you,” she sobbed out. “We were only just then speaking of it——”

“The whole affair is absurd and most unsuitable,” said the much harassed father, not unkindly, for he was very soft-hearted and he could not bear to see his dear little Mary in tears. “Most unsuitable,” he repeated ; “your positions are different. Mr. Lamley would certainly object, and I, as certainly, will not permit my daughter to enter a family where she is not received with open arms. The kindest thing I can do is to put a stop to it at once.”

“At least, Mr. Waddell,” said Dolly, “you will let us wait until I shall hear what my father says. I am truly attached to Mary, and I tell you plainly that nothing—*nothing* shall make me give her up.”

“Ah! you think so now, young sir,” said the Mayor, with a not unkind look at the young man, for Dolly's earnestness made some impression upon him in spite of himself, “you think so now, but—well! I will wait to hear what Mr. Lamley shall say ; but it is of no use—no use ; and the whole affair is unsuitable—most unsuitable.”

And with that the Mayor tucked his daughter's hand under his arm once more, and this time marched off in earnest, leaving Dolly in a very chaotic and disconsolate frame of mind, although Mary *did* give him a loving look of encouragement over her shoulders as she turned the

corner with her father and disappeared out of her lover's sight.

Now it happened that Mr. Lamley, senior, had that afternoon strolled into the club to look at the evening papers before going home to dinner. The usual conclave of gossips was assembled and deeply engaged in discussing some subject of more than ordinary interest, for when Mr. Lamley came into the smoking room they were gathered together in a knot round Major Pilton, who was holding forth in his usual loud and emphatic manner to a very attentive audience. As Mr. Lamley entered the knot broke up, and a sudden and suspicious silence fell upon the assembly, which was broken by the Major, whose rubicund visage was more purple than ever as he hailed his friend with some ordinary remark about the weather. Mr. Lamley shrewdly suspected that the gossips were talking about him, and though he was too proud, and had better taste than to ask what was so interesting them then and there, he made up his mind to find out what might be the reason of this sudden stoppage of the flow of the Major's eloquence and the rapt attention of his hearers. To this intent he quietly took up a paper and waited until his friend Archer should make a move homewards, for, as they lived opposite one another and dined at the same hour, they usually walked up the hill together.

"Going homewards, Lamley?" asked Archer at last, for Mr. Lamley's air of unconsciousness had deceived him, and he was quite unaware of the pumping process he was to go through before he and his friend should reach their respective gates.

"All right," said Mr. Lamley, looking at his watch, "I suppose it is about time."

And, nodding at the few members who were left, the two friends left the room, proceeded through the hall and down the club steps, and so on towards St. Philip's Park.

Mr. Lamley craftily engaged his friend in ordinary conversation until they were well out of the town, and on the garden-bordered road which led to their domiciles at the top of the Park.

"I say, Archer," he said. Then, suddenly stopping, and facing that individual, "What were you all talking about when I came into the room just now?"

"Eh! ah!" stammered Mr. Archer, very much discomfited by this sudden attack. "Talking about?—er—let me see!—er—when you came in?"

"Yes, when I came in. You were all listening to Pilton, and he suddenly stopped, and you separated as if a bombshell had burst in the midst of you. I thought I heard the word 'Lamley,'" added the artful and audacious gentleman who bore that name.

"'Pon my word, Lamley," said Mr. Archer, with an air of vexation, "you drive me in a corner. No harm was said, I assure you."

"Oh, well, listeners seldom hear any good of themselves," said Lamley, with an evident air of offence. "I suppose they have as much right to blackguard me as anyone else."

"On my honour, Lamley, you are mistaken," said Mr. Archer, earnestly. "Not a word was said against you; it was about——"

And here he hesitated.

"Eh? what was it about?" persisted Mr. Lamley, who was of a suspicious disposition, and whose curiosity was thoroughly aroused by the evident dislike to impart his information which Archer evinced.

"Well, if you *will* have it," said Archer, at last, and driven to bay, "it was about your son!"

"My son! Why, what has the young dog been after now?"

"Oh, I daresay it was all Pilton's nonsense. He's a regular gossip, you know—always poking and prying about."

"Well, but what does he say about the young rascal?"

"Oh, it's a cock-and-a-bull story about your boy and the mayor's daughter, that pretty little Miss Waddell, don't you know?"

And Mr. Archer gave a sigh of relief as he got out his item of news.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Lamley; "the thing's absurd,

and I think people might find something better to do than to go chattering about other folk in that idiotic manner."

"I daresay they might," said Archer, much nettled at his friend's remarks, for he was guiltily conscious that he was one of the persons at whose devoted heads those remarks were hurled; "but if people will make themselves conspicuous with a girl, and promenade about the Pier with her, and sit spooning about on seats in the Park, they must expect to be talked about, you know."

"Great Heavens! You don't mean to say that Dolly has been such a fool as that?" cried Mr. Lamley.

"All I know is what I have heard. I have not seen anything—got better things to do than to go round doing the private detective business. You had better ask Pilton."

And, coming here to his gate, with an abrupt nod—for he was much hurt at his friend's insinuations—Mr. Archer turned the handle and huffily departed.

"By George! I must look into this," said Mr. Lamley to himself as he entered his own domains: "the young idiot is making a fool of himself again. Most respectable man, too, the father—my own landlord! Great Heavens! it won't do at all—must be stopped at once. I'll speak to him after dinner."

From all which it will be seen that Master Dolly's love-affair was not the strictly-guarded secret he imagined it to be, and that there were one or two very unpleasant quarters of an hour in store for that ingenuous youth.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. LAMLEY PUTS DOWN HIS FOOT.

MR. LAMLEY, senior, had ample, and distasteful food for his mind as he leisurely dressed himself for dinner that evening, and, as he pondered over the information he had extorted from the unwilling Archer, he disliked more and more the task that night had in store for him. Dolly

was his only son, and Mr. Lamley was fond of him and proud of his good looks and social popularity. This was by no means the first time he had had to pose as the stern parent, for more than once Master Dolly had been forced to call in the paternal aid in some escapade or other, and a due modicum of very plain speaking on his father's part had been the price the young man had had to pay for the assistance granted.

Mr. Lamley was a man of the world, and not disposed to be too severe upon youthful indiscretions. A certain amount of wild-oat sowing he expected on his son's part, and he had not been disappointed in this expectation. Indeed, he was getting, too, a little tired of Dolly's pulls upon his purse-strings, hence the hints about "looking after a girl with money," and so forth, with which he had favoured his son; for he thought it was high time that Master Dolly should take unto himself a helpmate and settle down into decorous married life. Moreover, as he thought over the matter and recalled the escapades of the past, and looked at the present matter from Mr. Archer's point of view, he remembered that the mayor's daughter was a constant visitor at Mrs. Laver's house, and that Dolly had frequently—too frequently, perhaps—put in an appearance there, and he made up his mind to cross-examine his friend at Rozel on this subject, and to ask for her assistance in putting an end to the matter. It would never do to have such a scandal as seemed to be imminent; the affair was already a toothsome topic with the veterans at the Club, and it must be put a stop to at once.

And so Mr. Lamley went down to dinner in no very amiable frame of mind.

Dolly's altogether unpleasant interview with the father of his beloved had occupied some time, and the soup had already given place to the fish before he made his appearance in the dining-room at The Towers. Want of punctuality was a cardinal sin with Mr. Lamley, who was the soul of punctuality himself, and he greeted his son with a portentous frown as he sat down and unfolded his napkin.

"Awfully sorry, father," said the penitent youth, with a dismal foreboding that this last error of his would make the coming interview still more difficult. "Found I was out of tobacco, and just ran into the town to get some."

Mr. Lamley did not vouchsafe any reply, and the meal proceeded in a painful silence, which was only broken by spasmodic efforts at conversation on Dolly's and his sister's part; for Lamley gloomily consumed his courses without uttering a word, save only the necessary orders to the servants.

"Master's in a nice tare," said one of the assistant flunkeys to the other, as they bore away the last course and left the company in the dining-room to their dessert. "Going to be a jolly row. Young master has been at it again."

And he grinned with delight to think that his young master was going to have a taste of that power of invective which Mr. Lamley had often and freely exercised upon him, together with the other domestics.

The atmosphere in the dining-room was cloudy and sulphurous, and Alicia Lamley found it to be too unwholesome for her, so she speedily took her departure, wondering what new enormity her brother had committed, and hoping his father would not be too hard upon him.

Poor Dolly had been racking his brains to discover what should be the cause of his father's evident displeasure—his being late for dinner was not a heavy enough transgression to account for so long continued a gloom on his father's part. He could think of no fault which would account for this unpleasant attitude of affairs, and he imagined his father must have some private and personal reason for his uncomfortable frame of mind—some business worry perhaps, or perhaps he was unwell; at any rate, this was certainly not the time for him to open out as to the state of his, Dolly's, affections. Such a confession as he had to make must be delivered under more favourable auspices than the present, and Dolly reluctantly put off the evil hour till the morrow, for the delay must in any case be of the shortest. To

his astonishment and dismay, however, his father took away all chance of his waiting for a more favourable opportunity, and utterly confounded his son by showing that he was quite *au fait* as to the pretty little romance the young man was engaged in, and which he had fondly imagined to be a secret confined to the bosoms of only one or two of the persons most intimately concerned.

"I have stood a great deal from you, Adolphus," said his father, breaking the silence at last, pushing away his glass, and throwing himself back in his chair, "a great deal, sir, and I'll be hanged if I will stand any more nonsense. There was that girl at Southsea, with that old harridan, her mother, writing to me and threatening breach of promise, and badgering me out of my life. It's intolerable, sir, disgraceful! and I will have no more of it!" and Mr. Lamley glowered across the table at the confused and conscious Dolly.

"Why, what——," he stammered out at last.

"Oh, don't come any of your injured innocence tricks with *me*, sir!" exclaimed the father, "your disgraceful conduct is the talk of the whole town; for your sister's sake, if not for mine, you might have carried on your low amours in some other place; it is abominable!"

"At least you will tell me of what I am accused," said Dolly, becoming angry in his turn, cursing the gossips, and not, even now, imagining that it was his dear little Mary at whom, together with him, his father was hurling his execrations.

"Come now, you are an innocent lamb, eh!" cried his father, angry and sneering. "Of what you are accused! Look here, sir, the last fiasco was with a garrison hack; the cards were on the table, she played for you, you young fool, and she lost. But this is quite another matter, and I will not have a respectable girl scandalised in connection with my son. I wonder her brother, or father, do not give you the horse-whipping you richly deserve, and——"

"Stop, father," said Dolly, rising, and seeing now to whom, and to what his father was alluding. "I understand now, you are speaking of Mary, of Mary Waddell,

and your remarks are only pardonable because you do not know the truth. I was going to speak to you on the subject to-night——”

“Why, what on earth does the boy mean?” interrupted Mr. Lamley, with the most profound astonishment.

“I will tell you, sir,” said Dolly, calmly and quietly.

“I have proposed to Mary Waddell, and she has accepted me; this evening I saw her father, and promised him to ask your approval of our engagement.”

“Whew—w—w—,” whistled his father, utterly confounded at this piece of intelligence, “the boy is mad! Sit down, sir, sit down! You have proposed—she has accepted—and the father— Great heavens! my poor boy, you must be an idiot! Do you suppose for one instant that I will give my consent to your making such a fool of yourself as *that*! An auctioneer’s daughter! I suppose he will take you into partnership, eh? ‘Waddell and Lamley, auctioneers, appraisers, &c.,’ and we shall see you in the rostrum, with a little hammer, and a lot of greasy, hook-nosed, knock-out men in front of you. ‘Going! going! gone!’” and Mr. Lamley laughed aloud at the picture he had painted.

“I don’t care two pins about that,” said Dolly angrily.

“Mr. Waddell is a respectable, honourable man, and his daughter is——”

“Oh, yes, of course, I know what his daughter is, you can spare me and yourself any rhapsodies. But seriously, Adolphus, you must be jesting, or if you are not jesting, by Jove, it is time that an end was put to such idiotic nonsense. Your sister and your father are obliged to you for the honourable alliance you propose for our family, but we must decline it, sir, we must decline it. If you are not lost to every sense of right feeling, as to seriously think of mating with a tradesman’s daughter, well—you are of age, and I suppose I cannot shut you up in a lunatic asylum. But one thing I can do, and that is to refuse to see you, or to speak with you, if you persist in such a ruinous piece of iniquity.”

“This is rather rich, father, after all your lessons about equality, and so forth,” returned his son, bitterly, “I

should have imagined that Mr. Lamley, the Radical Mr. Lamley, the champion of the people's rights——"

"Do you bandy words with me, sir?" exclaimed his father, in a towering passion, at having the tables thus turned upon him, "leave the room, sir, leave the room, and let me hear no more of this infernal nonsense." And poor Dolly, who saw too late that his unfilial retort-uncourteous had done him no good, was forced to retire with what grace he might, a prey to many anxious thoughts.

Dolly was too full of his woes to keep those painful possessions to himself, and he hastened into the drawing-room to pour out his troubles to the sympathising ears of his sister. Miss Lamley, however, was not in that apartment, and her brother, who knew her haunts, soon found her ensconced in the garden, reading, and refecting herself with a plate of strawberries.

"Ah, Dolly, I am so glad you have come, do sit down and have some strawberries—— Why, what is the matter with you? you look all manner of tragic woes," said she, as he came towards her, and sat down beside her.

"Matter enough!" he exclaimed gloomily, drumming with his fingers on the table. "I don't know where it will end, but I intend to stick to it, and the sooner father knows this the better."

"Why, Dolly, what *is* the matter then?" asked Alicia, anxiously looking at her brother. "I saw there was something wrong between you and father at dinner; what is it?"

"The fact is, Allie, I am engaged—and to the dearest——"

"Engaged! You are always in hot water with your poor, dear affections, Dolly," said his sister laughing; "but—engaged! you are joking?"

"I never was more serious in my life, Allie, and I wish you would not make a jest of it. I know *I* am miserable enough about it all."

"What—is Araminta unkind? or are the stern parents inexorable?" said his sister, still refusing to take his in-

formation seriously, for she had too often been the recipient of such interesting confessions for her to believe that her volatile brother could be in earnest.

"Look here, Alicia, if you can't be serious when you see me in such trouble, I will leave you," and suiting the action to the word, Dolly rose to go away.

"Nonsense, Dolly; don't be absurd," said the "superior" Miss Lamley; "sit down and tell me all about it, and first of all tell me who is it?"

"It is Mary Waddell," said Dolly with much brevity, and looking at Alicia to mark the effect of his communication.

"Mary Waddell!" exclaimed the young lady with prolonged emphasis on the syllables. "Mary Waddell!" Why that must be the daughter of the auctioneer—the Mayor! You don't mean to say——"

"I *do* mean to say then," said Dolly; "and I can't see why there should be all this absurd astonishment. What is there wrong with Mary, pray?"

"Oh! but Dolly, you cannot be serious! Why, the father is a tradesman——"

"From the accent you and father put upon the word the man might be a forger or a murderer. I am sick to death of such nonsense. If Mary's father *is* a tradesman, do you suppose *I* care? Hasn't father brought us both up to despise such humbug?"

"But, Dolly, when it comes to marriage, you know!" said his sister, horrified at the very idea.

"Aye, there's the rub," retorted Dolly bitterly. "Preaching is very fine and very easy, too; but, when it comes to practice—oh! that is quite a different thing. Mr. Waddell is much respected; he is an honourable man, and if he is not what you and father call a gentleman, I am sure he would never do a dirty deed, and he is quite gentleman enough for me. And as for Mary!—well! wait till you know her, Allie!"

"Well, but Dolly, and what does father say to it all?" asked Alicia.

"He is just mad about it," said Dolly, gloomily. "Won't hear of it; but when he sees I am in earnest he

will come round in time. The worst of it is, what am I to say to Mr. Waddell? I promised him I would speak to father."

"You don't mean to say it has gone so far as that!" cried Alicia.

"Indeed then, I do. The old gentleman caught us together in the Park this afternoon; a fine rage he was in, and, of course, I had to promise to make it all clear."

"Well, Dolly, I have not the honour of Miss Waddell's acquaintance, but I cannot say I have much opinion of a girl who can carry on a clandestine——"

"Stop a minute, Allie," interrupted Dolly; it was my fault—entirely my fault; I almost *made* her keep it quiet for a while—till I could sound the governor and prepare the way a little, don't you know—and she was begging me with tears in her eyes—poor, dear little woman—to put an end to the concealment when her father appeared on the scene."

"Still, it all seems so—how long has it been going on?"

"Oh! ever since the Bazaar. Mrs. Laver knows all about it; it was at Rozel that I kept on meeting Mary——"

"Then Mrs. Laver ought to be ashamed of herself. If father knew that, I do not think he would give that lady so much of his company."

"I am not so sure of that," said Dolly, with a grin, "but, Allie—*you* won't go against me, now, will you, dear? You have always been such a good sister to me——"

"Ah! you artful and insinuating young man; you want to drag me into your complicated love affairs, eh? But seriously, Dolly, I think you are wrong and father is right. Nevertheless, I promise you that I will preserve a masterly attitude of neutrality; and if father speaks to me I will do my best to keep the peace between you; and, after all, you know, you have often been in love before and nothing very dreadful has happened thus far. And now I must go in and give father his tea."

And deafening her ears to Dolly's protestations that "this time there was no mistake about it, he really was

in earnest now," and so forth, Miss Lamley gracefully moved across the lawn and laughingly made her escape, leaving Dolly to smoke a calming cigar and to ponder over his tangled affairs.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DORCAS MEETING.

MAUD BERRINGTON little knew what was in store for her at the end of her journey, as the train rapidly bore her and her mother homeward from their visit to Livermoor Castle. Mrs. Berrington, as yet, had found no opportunity to execute the commission with which Lord Livermoor had entrusted her, and to urge the claims of that elderly lover upon her daughter; and Maud fondly imagined that that little game was played out. She had, so she thought, made it tolerably plain to the enamoured Peer that his evident intentions towards her were declined with thanks, and she looked upon her escape from the Castle without any declaration on Lord Livermoor's part as a sign that he had seen what she so earnestly desired to make plain to him, and had, in view of this her evident repugnance, given up all thoughts of asking her to share his rank and fortune and to take her place among the British peeresses as the Countess of Livermoor. She was most unpleasantly disabused of this idea on the very day after her arrival at Woodville. Although her mother had not in so many words informed Mrs. Laver, and through Mrs. Laver the St. Philip's world, that her daughter was the future spouse of the great Peer, she had, at any rate, given considerable colour to such a report by the complacent manner in which she had received the little grass-widow's hints and fishing questions; and, if anything were wanted to make the Parkites certain of the honour in store for one of their fair damsels, the visit to Livermoor Castle left little room for doubt on the subject.

Now, the Vicar of St. Philip's was anything but a rich man. His narrow means precluded him from indulging in much hospitality, and Mrs. Argle, who loved the society of her fellow-beings, and who, at the same time, did not like to be always in and out of the houses in the Park without occasionally making some sort of a return for favours received, hit upon a plan which gathered together the St. Philip's feminines in her drawing room, absolved her from the arduous task of having to amuse them, and at the same time—and at the cost only of such mild refectations as tea and bread-and-butter—permitted her to pose as a charitable vicar's wife, quite alive to the duties and responsibilities of her position. She started a fortnightly sewing class. The articles there cut out and made up amidst considerable clattering of tongues were disposed of at an annual sale held in St. Philip's School-room, and the proceeds handed over to some Zenana Mission or another.

In this way, then, Mrs. Argle discharged, or imagined she discharged, her social obligations, and had, at the same time, the satisfaction of seeing her name in a subscription list, with a respectable sum of money to the tail of it.

In the common dearth of amusements which is incident to the small English country town, these Zenana meetings were hailed with delight, and were usually very largely patronised; for silence, as has been hinted just now, was by no means strictly enforced, and the gossip which accompanied the click of the needles, the snap of the scissors, and the ear-splitting rending of calico, was found to be a great attraction, and a source of the keenest enjoyment both to dames and damosels. One of these charitable entertainments was toward on the day after Maud's return; there was a large assembly, and the work and accompanying gossip were in full swing.

"Does anyone know whether the Berringtons have come back?" asked the chief priestess, Mrs. Argle, during a slight pause in the tongue-clattering.

"Oh, yes!" said Mrs. Modbury. "My husband met their fly yesterday as he was coming home to dinner from

the club. Lucinda will be prouder than ever, now she has been staying with Lord Livermoor.

"I wonder whether it is true," asked Mrs. Archer, who was always the last to hear anything; "but I *did* hear, though for the life of me I cannot remember who told me—oh yes! I do remember now; it was Major Pilton, of course, how he does go on!—I *did* hear that Mrs. Berrington, or was it Maud now?—"

"Yes, it is quite true," interrupted Mrs. Laver, for that lively little dame found it difficult to endure Mrs. Archer's lengthy jobations; "it is Maud, and I suppose they will be married soon."

"I should hope so," said Mrs. Modbury, spitefully. "He is too old to care about waiting long."

"My *dear* Mrs. Modbury," said Mrs. Argle, who worshipped a lord, and was shocked at her friend's flippant tone, "such an *excellent* man, so very distinguished, and so good! I am sure dear Maud ought to consider herself signally blessed—quite an honour to St. Philip's, as I say to the Vicar."

At this propitious moment the door opened, and the fair subject of the conversation entered the room, and alone; for her mother was too fatigued with yesterday's journey to accompany her daughter, who, indeed, herself would not have come had it not been for the fond hope that she might possibly meet her beloved cleric at the meeting—the Reverend Charles Coleson, under great pressure and much against his will, being occasionally requisitioned by his Vicar's wife to "read something" to the feminine conclave.

The innocent Maud, who was entirely ignorant of her mother's manœuvrings at Mrs. Laver's, was much surprised at the *impressé* manner of her reception.

"My *dear* Maud, I *am* so glad you have come; so good of you after your long journey of yesterday. Now, do come and sit beside me, and tell me all about your visit," said Mrs. Argle, coming forward to greet her. "You must allow me to heartily congratulate you, my dear," she added in a whisper, as she kissed Maud and looked her in the face.

"It really is disgusting the way Mrs. Argle goes on," whispered the jaundiced Mrs. Modbury to her neighbour. "Anyone can see she is not accustomed to society—so—snobbish!"

Mistress Maud was quite taken aback, and she sank down into the seat, which the Vicar's wife officiously pushed towards her, in much confusion.

"What did it all mean? Was it possible that they were already talking about her, as she had dismally feared they would talk? Surely her mother could not have been so foolish as to have said anything? What a hateful position she was placed in!"

She quickly found that her mother *had* been talking, and to some purpose, too; for the open-speaking Mrs. Laver, who saw, indeed, no reason for reticence about what she, and everybody else in the room, regarded as a singular piece of good fortune which had fallen to Maud's lot, took up her parable.

"Well, my dear," she said, aloud, and from across the table, "so you are going to be exalted to the Upper House, eh? I am sure we all sincerely congratulate you. We are all dying to know about Livermoor Castle, and when it is to be, and everything."

And she looked quizzically at the much confused Maud, while murmurs of congratulation went round the room.

"You are giving me a distinction I neither possess nor wish for," said Maud, rousing all her forces and trying to look unconcerned under the general scrutiny. "I cannot imagine how such a flattering report can have got about, and I can only give it my positive denial."

"Oh, fie, Maud!" exclaimed Mrs. Laver; "how can you say such a thing? Why, your own mother told me of it."

"My mother!" said Maud, with a dismal consciousness that this was precisely what was to have been expected from that lady. "You must have mistaken her; it is absolutely false."

"Well, my dear, if she did not exactly say it in so many words, she certainly did not deny the fact, and I as

certainly thought—— Well, I *am* surprised! You must forgive me, Maud."

"Then it is not true after all, and you are *not* engaged to Lord Livermoor?" said Mrs. Argle, with much disappointment.

"No, Mrs. Argle; I can assure you that I am not in that desirable position, and I can also assure you that there is not the very faintest possibility of such an auspicious state of affairs ever taking place."

"Well, I never! Mr. Argle *will* be astonished," said the Vicar's wife.

And, as the subject was evidently distasteful to Maud, nobody said anything more about it, and other topics were languidly discussed; for, whatever they were talking about, the whole assembly was thinking about this one of Maud's matrimonial *fiasco*.

"Well, I can't make it all out; there is a mystery somewhere," said Mrs. Laver to Mrs. Modbury, as they walked homewards together; for Maud knew the hurricane of gossip which her departure would have caused, and had prudently stayed to the very last. "I certainly gathered from Lucinda that her daughter was engaged to the man; it is beyond me."

"It is perfectly plain to me, then," returned the astute Mrs. Modbury. "A case of the wish was father to the thought, my dear. Lucinda Berrington was a little too hasty in jumping to conclusions, and mistook the interest of a friend for the affection of a lover."

"I shan't believe it till I have seen Lucinda herself," said Mrs. Laver, as she unhasped the gate of Rozel, and wished her friend *au revoir*.

Now, Mary Waddell was very clever with her needle, and, moreover, a past mistress in the abstruse art of "cutting out," accomplishments she owed to that notable housewife, her mother. On these accounts, and because her father was the universal landlord of the Parkites, she was pressed into the service of the Zenana Mission, and was a constant attendant at Mrs. Argle's drawing-room meetings.

The side of the Park in which the Berrington domicile

was situated was Mary's shortest route to her father's house in the High Street, and so it came about that she and Maud were accustomed to walk homewards together after these charitable entertainments. Mary had no other friends of her own age and sex in St. Philip's; for the lawyers' and doctors' wives and daughters turned up their professional noses at the auctioneer's daughter, and her mother, who had a proper pride, would not allow Mary to associate with the tradesmen's families, and so Mary, who had a high admiration for the beautiful and aristocratic-looking Maud, was won't to look forward to these homeward strolls, during which she had, on her part, succeeded in making a most favourable impression upon her companion, and thus a kindly friendship had been struck up between our two fair damsels. As soon, then, as Maud began to gather her impedimenta together, Mary followed her example, and the girls made their adieux and took their departure together.

Mary had, of course, been an attentive listener alike to the conversation which took place before her friend's arrival, and to the strong denial Maud had given to the gossiping sisterhood's congratulations; she saw that Maud was very much moved, and vexed; and as they proceeded down the hill she held her tongue, and kept silent, for she scarcely knew what to say in the circumstances.

"It is abominable the way people gossip in this place," said Maud at last, and with some heat. "It is a pity they can find nothing better to talk about than other folk's affairs."

"It *is* annoying, I know," said Mary, with a shrewd suspicion that before long *her* little affair would form an appetising addition to the St. Philip's menu; "but," she added consolingly, "after all it does not make much difference, and it is better for people to know the truth at first hand, than to go on circulating all sorts of false reports; no one knows what mischief may be done in this way."

"You are perfectly right, Mary, and the wise little maiden you always are; and when all is said and done, I

am glad I have had the chance to deny such an absurd report. As you say, no one knows what evil might have been done," and Maud fell into silence, as she thought of what Charles Coleson must think of her; and this with a sincere hope that her denial of the matrimonial honours proposed for her, might reach the ears of that much-favoured individual.

Mrs. Berrington was awaiting her daughter's return with much trepidation, for the afternoon's post had brought her a communication from Lord Livermoor, in which the impatient lover informed her of his intention to favour St. Philip's with a visit in the course of the next week, in order to put an end to a suspense which he described as being unendurable. Moreover, there was a small parcel addressed in his hand to Maud, and containing, so he informed Mrs. Berrington, a small memento of the pleasure he had experienced in having the young lady of his affections under his roof. This, Mrs. Berrington felt, was a very risky experiment indeed, and she was almost tempted to put the parcel under lock and key until a more favourable opportunity for bringing it forth should appear; for if, as she almost feared, Maud should return the gift, there would, without doubt, be an end to all her high projects for her daughter, and an end also to the thousand pounds a year which the astute Peer had so successfully dangled before her longing eyes. The poverty of her surroundings had never appeared to Mrs. Berrington in so gloomy and depressing a light as on her return from the splendours of Livermoor Castle, and she was more than ever determined to leave no stone unturned in the furtherance of such a very advantageous alliance. But while she was trying to make up her mind to put away Lord Livermoor's "memento," Maud was saying good-bye to Mary at the gate, and was in the room, indeed, before her mother had time to conceal the little package, which she had snatched up. Maud did not fail to observe her mother's confusion; and her surprised look left her mother, taken thus at unawares, no alternative but to place the parcel in her daughter's hand.

"Why, what is this, mother?" asked Maud, examining

the packet. "From Hunt and Roskell's, and addressed to me! Why," she exclaimed, suddenly guessing at the truth, for she had no friends who were likely to send her presents from high-charging jewellers, "it must be from——" and colouring, and looking very angry, she returned the parcel to her mother unopened. "It is, of course, from Lord Livermoor, and I will have nothing to do with it," she said.

"Of course it is from Lord Livermoor, Maud, and very kind of him it is. He has written to me, and in his letter he says he is sending you a memento of our visit to the Castle. How absurd you are, dear; pray, *why* should you not accept a little present from him?" and with this Mrs. Berrington gave way to her curiosity, and before Maud had had a chance to even protest, she had torn off the paper coverings, opened the jewel case they had enwrapped, and was gazing with rapt admiration upon a very splendid, and evidently most costly diamond bracelet.

"How *could* you, mother!" exclaimed Maud hotly and angrily, and stretching out her hand, "please give it to me, and I will send it back at once!"

"Now, Maud, don't be so ridiculous," said her mother, hastily snapping to the case, and holding it firmly in her hand. "Why, I repeat, should you refuse to accept so kind and polite an attention?"

"Oh, mother, what do you ask me for, when I am sure you know the reason," said Maud, preparing for the battle royal which she knew to be imminent. "If it had been any other old gentleman in whose house we had been staying, I should have been grateful for his kindness, although I did not want such an absurdly costly present. But Lord Livermoor has been—it is too absurd!—but, of course, you *know* the way he has been persecuting me with his attentions——"

"Persecuting!" interrupted Mrs. Berrington, "there is not another girl in England who would talk in such a ridiculous way; why you ought to be proud to have attracted the attention of so good and great a man—it is positively wicked!"

"Now, mother dear, do not be angry with me, the thing is impossible; he is old enough to be my grandfather, and besides, I positively detest him."

"You detest Lord Livermoor!" exclaimed her mother, aghast at the idea of anyone daring to detest so mighty a potentate. "And, may I ask, who are you to—but, Maud dear, I will not be angry; it is all too sudden, most unadvised on his part. I told him——"

"You told him?" cried Maud. "And may I ask, in my turn, is this a plot to——"

"A plot, my dear, how can you use such an expression to me? And what more natural than that Lord Livermoor should consult me upon a subject so nearly touching me? And why should I not wish to see my daughter so suitably settled in life, occupying a position I never even dared to dream of? You cannot seriously intend to let such an opportunity pass by you? Think of how worried I am about money, of what a wretched life of anxiety I am compelled to pass. It is selfish of you, Maud, so unlike you too, and, after all, if you do not quite like him at first, he is so good, so highly respected. You *cannot* be so foolish. And then, look at the position—the Countess of Livermoor! the wife of one of the highest and wealthiest Peers! Maud, I shall think you mad, positively mad, if you let any silly girl's foolishness come between you and such wonderful good fortune."

Maud had let her mother run on, for she thought it best to allow her to have her say out, and it gave her an opportunity to compose herself, and to arrange her refusal in as palatable a form as possible.

"Mother, dear," she said at last, kneeling down beside her, and taking her mother's hand in hers, "you know I would do *anything* for you, it makes my heart bleed often and often to see you so worried. I would work my fingers to the bone for you, but—oh, how can you expect me to marry a man I hate? yes, *hate*! I do not care one bit for his rank and his money. What good would it all be to me, if I had to live with a man I simply loathed——"

"You are a very wicked girl, Maud," cried her mother,

suddenly rising and shaking off her daughter; "I will not stay here to listen to such absurd folly and such wicked ingratitude!" And with this Mrs. Berrington rustled out of the room in a fine rage, leaving Maud to painfully contemplate the unhappy state of affairs Lord Livermoor's misguided affections had brought about in the little establishment at Woodville.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN UNEXPECTED ALLY.

MR. WADDELL was very much agitated at the confirmation to his father-in-law's suspicions which he had so unexpectedly lighted upon, and he hurried Mary homewards at a merciless pace, keeping a tight grip upon her hand with his arm the while.

"Father!" she exclaimed at last, and quite out of breath, "I am not going to run away; and you are walking so fast I cannot keep up with you."

"Eh! eh! I beg your pardon, Mary," said the Mayor, letting her hand go and slackening the pace. "I did not think that my little girl would treat her old father and mother in this way," he went on as they proceeded more slowly. "Your grandfather saw you and—the young man on the Pier, and I would not believe him, Mary; it's a new thing for *you* to be deceitful."

"Oh! father, you cannot tell how I blame myself and how miserable I have been," said Mary, penitently.

"Of course, I know it's more his fault than yours; but still——"

"Yes, I know I ought to have told you and mother at once, but it all seemed so sudden and so unsettled. Indeed, father, he was speaking of coming to you when you came up," said Mary, looking up appealingly to her father.

"Neither your mother nor Sidney has any idea of such a thing. Of course, your mother must be told at once,

but I think you had better say nothing to Sid, for I am afraid, Mary, this affair will not be a happy one for you. I don't, for one instant, expect that the young man's father will give his consent, though you won't go to any-one empty-handed, my dear; and if it is as I fear, there must be an end to it all at once."

And as Mr. Waddell uttered this last sentence with a very decided accent upon the last two words, they reached their house and entered. Mrs. Waddell was in the drawing room dozing over some work and idly wondering why her husband and her daughter should be so late for the evening meal, for Sidney was dining out that night.

"Wherever have you been, father—and Mary?" she asked as they came in together, "and what *is* the matter, my dear?" she asked anxiously, for Mary threw herself down beside her and buried her face in her mother's lap.

"Matter enough, Louisa," said the Mayor gloomily; "your father was right, after all, and we have not looked after our young folks strictly enough."

"Oh, father dear, do not speak like that; I cannot bear it!" cried Mary, sobbing.

"Why father! why Mary, my poor dear! What does it all mean? What has she done, father?" cried out the perplexed lady.

"Done? I think you had better ask *her*," said Mr. Waddell, and with that he went out to prepare for his supper, rightly thinking it best to leave Mary to make her confession without his assistance.

To say that Mrs. Waddell was astonished at her daughter's confidences but feebly expresses the state of her mind, as she listened to the broken sentences which informed her of the state of affairs. To Mary's great delight she took a much more favourable view of these affairs than did her husband, and after a few—*very* few—reproaches delivered at her daughter's concealment, she entered with the keenest delight into all the *pros* and *cons* of the matter, and greatly cheered Mary at the sanguine light in which she regarded her daughter's love affair.

"Of course, he is a gentleman, my dear," she said ; as if my Mary would marry anyone *but* a gentleman ; and if your father is an auctioneer, he is not so poor as some, and besides, he is the Mayor and a magistrate, and anyone would be proud to have such a daughter-in-law, though I say it as shouldn't."

But still the Mayor shook his head, and intimated once again, and very firmly, that his girl should enter no family where she was not received with open arms.

Mr. Adolphus Lamley was in anything but a comfortable frame of mind, as on the morrow he slowly walked down St. Philip's Hill towards the abode of his little sweetheart. His father had scarcely deigned to speak to him at breakfast, and had very plainly let his son see that he was to consider himself in disgrace. What to do was a problem that exercised him much, and the more he thought it over the more hopeless did it all seem. He knew his father's obstinacy of old, and he could see no way out of the tangle. He had had great difficulty in making up his mind as to whether he should write to Mr. Waddell or speak to him, and after much consideration he thought it better to go and see that gentleman ; for a letter might meet with no reply, and he could put matters—so he thought—in a more favourable light in an interview, and at the same time, perhaps, get a little time, during which, by some miracle, his father might be won over to take a more kindly view of affairs. He knew Mary would let her people see that she was in earnest, and he trusted to their affection for her to make them put aside their pride and keep the way open, at any rate, for a little while.

But still, he felt he should have liked to have consulted with someone, and, as he was wishing his sister would have helped him, a happy thought came to him, and he struck across the Park and soon found himself in Mrs. Laver's familiar drawing-room.

"Well, my knight of the doleful visage," said she, when they had exchanged greetings, "what is the matter now, and to what may I attribute the honour, etc., etc., of this early visit?"

"Oh! Mrs. Laver, it is all up between me and Mary, I am afraid," said Dolly, in a dismal tone.

"All up?" quoted Mrs. Laver. "I suppose you mean by that elegant phrase that you and she have had a lovers' quarrel, and you want me to help you to make it up? Well, tell me all about it, then."

And she settled herself comfortably in her chair; for she dearly loved the position of confidante.

"It is much worse than that," said Dolly, speaking seriously. "Mary's father came across us last night in the Town Park. Of course, we had to explain it all, and he was in a terrible rage at first——"

"If young people will go billing and cooing in public parks, they must expect fond parents to ask awkward questions when they discover them," interrupted the lady, with a smile. "But seriously," she went on, "I think it is quite the best thing that could have happened; for Mary, who is as honest as the day, dear little soul! was getting quite ill with all the worry of it."

"Yes, I know, and we were talking of that when the father appeared. But the worst of it is, Mrs. Laver, I promised him to speak to the Governor——"

"Well, and have you? Have you spoken?" asked Mrs. Laver, in much curiosity as to the result of the interview.

"Of course I have," said Dolly: "last night, and he went into a regular tare; said he would have nothing to say to it, and, of course, Mr. Waddell won't stand that, you know, and I have promised to let him know what the Governor says, and how to tell him I can't make out at all. I thought you could give me a word of advice."

"It is an awkward plight. I feared there would be some trouble, but your father is such a terrible Radical, I scarcely thought——"

"Yes, that is it. I brought that up, and it nearly made him mad," said Dolly.

"How foolish of you to say anything to make him angry just now!" said Mrs. Laver.

"Yes, I know it was," replied Dolly, penitently; "but

the way he spoke about Mary was too much for me. I didn't stay to think, you know. But what on earth I am to say to Mr. Waddell passes me."

And Dolly gazed at his confidante in the forlorn hope that her cleverness might help him in his difficulty.

"I am sure I don't know what to say," said Mrs. Laver, after reflecting for some little time. "It is better for you to see Mary's father than to write to him, I think; and you must try and gain a little time. Put it to him as gently as you can—but, of course you will do that—and, in the meanwhile, I am certain to see Mr. Lamley soon, and you may be sure I will do my best for you and for my pleasant little friend. There! that is the best advice I can give you."

"One thing is certain," said Dolly, emphatically, "and that is, nothing shall make me give up Mary. I am very grateful to you, Mrs. Laver. The Governor thinks a lot of what you say, but still—he is very obstinate when once he has gotten an idea into his head, and, I confess, the whole thing looks hopeless enough just now."

And with this Dolly despondently took leave of his friend, shaking his head at her cheery exhortation to him to "take courage and hope for the best."

Dolly marched straight away from Rozel to the Mayor's house in the High Street; but as he drew near to that comfortable and prosperous-looking domicile he slackened his pace, and tried to frame a sentence which should convey his father's refusal without hurting the Mayor's pride. In vain, however, did he cudgel his brains; his ingenuity could discover no form of words which could soften the unpleasant information he had to convey, and he desperately determined to trust to the inspiration of the moment.

Had Mr. Waddell been a pushing, ambitious man, he might have looked to his snobbism to put up with some preliminary rebuffs in order to see his daughter, and through her himself, raised a step or two in the social scale; but Mary's description of her father had left no room for hope in this direction, and Dolly's own short

experience of the Mayor during the interview in the Town Park had been long enough to show him that the Mayor of St. Philip's had a sufficient opinion of himself and his belongings, and was not in the least likely to put up with any slurs or slights to his importance.

"Mr. Waddell was at home," said the maid, in answer to his ring at the bell and his question; and she conducted him through the passage, opened the swing door, and ushered the gallant, but downcast, officer into the Mayor's business sanctum.

The Mayor was in, truly, and so was Mr. Wellings also; for that venerable gentleman had "just stepped round" to see how things were getting on, and to hear the result of his son-in-law's cross-examination of the peccant Mary.

"How do you do, Mr. Waddell?" said Dolly, shaking hands with that gentleman. "Fine morning," he added feebly, with a look at Mr. Wellings.

"You need not mind me, young sir," said the venerable one, with some severity; for he had heard the story of the Town Park *fiasco*, and was more vexed than pleased to find how far matters had gone. "Mary Waddell is my grand-daughter, and I am here to know what is to be the end of all this—this folly."

"Hush! Mr. Wellings," said Mr. Waddell, rising and placing a chair for Dolly. "Let us hear——"

"It's all very well to say 'Hush!' Waddell, but I'm not a-going to have my little gell talked about for nothing," said the old gentleman, knocking decidedly with his stick upon the floor.

"I am sorry——," hesitated Dolly, looking first at one and then at the other of his auditors. "I am sure—— of course, we ought to have told you at once, sir"—this to the Mayor. "I dislike concealment as well as you——"

"Then why didn't you?" asked the irrepressible grandfather. "What is the use of shilly-shallying and beatin' about the bush, if you know your own mind and ain't playing the fool with Mary?"

"Sir," said Dolly, angrily, "you have no right to speak

to me in that way. I have explained my position to Mr. Waddell, and I fail to see——”

“Yes, yes,” said Mr. Waddell, interrupting; “leave it to me, Mr. Wellings. If it would have been better to have come to me at once, Mr. Lamley has done his best to make up for it. There is no question of playing the fool, as you call it, or he would not be here now. But you have spoken to your father, as you promised?” he continued, looking at Dolly.

“I have, Mr. Waddell. I spoke to him last night, and he—he——”

And here the young man hesitated, and waited for the sudden inspiration, which failed him, as is not uncommonly the case.

“Ah! it is as I feared,” said Mr. Waddell, with a sigh, for he was thinking of Mary’s grief and disappointment; “it is as I feared—your father objects. Well, I am sorry—sorry for Mary, and sorry for you, too, Mr. Lamley; for I am now convinced that you are in earnest. But it can’t be helped—can’t be helped. You are young, both of you, and you will get over it.”

“Mr. Waddell,” said Dolly, rising and shaking hands with the Mayor, “I am grateful to you for your kindness, but do not, I beg of you, for Mary’s sake as well as mine, let this be the end; do not let a pride—natural enough, I confess—come between us. I know she loves me, and I love her with all my heart; I refuse to give her up for anyone, or anything.”

“Shake hands with me, too!” cried Mr. Wellings, suiting the action to the word, and suddenly veering round in his opinions at Dolly’s last words. “You are a fine young feller, sir. Your sentiments does you credit, sir—just what I should have said at your age. You shall have her, sir—you shall win her and wear her, sir, and I’ll take care she don’t come to you empty-handed.”

Dolly was dumbfounded at the sudden champion he had found, and shook hands heartily with the excited old man.

“Eh, son-in-law, eh?” cried Mr. Wellings, “eh? He shall have her, eh?”

"I only wish it could be so," said the Mayor; "for I confess I am pleased with you, my young friend, but——"

"Oh! bother the buts, Waddell!" exclaimed Mr. Wellings. "He's fond of her, and she's fond of him, and what more do you want? They shan't want for a sovereign or two to set up house with."

"If that was all——" returned the Mayor, "but, seriously, you would not like your grand-daughter to force her way into a family where she is not wanted? At any rate, I don't intend my daughter to be put in such a position."

"Ah! you always was a uppish and proud man, Waddell. What has the young chap's father got to object to I should like to know? We ain't paupers, and what's more, there ain't a more respectable family in St. Philip's, though I says it. If he's a officer, there's a plenty of tradesfolk in the army as I know well enough, and you're a magistrate, and Sid's a 'varsity man, if you *are* an auctioneer and me an upholsterer; and as for Mary—why there ain't a better, or a better-looking gell in England; anyone would be proud of her. Look here, Waddell, just you take my advice; I'm an old man, and I've see'd a lot of life in my time. Put your pride in your pocket, and give the young folks a little time; don't be in too much of a hurry to come between two lovin' hearts. 'Let no man put asunder,' as the Scripture says. If it is to be, it is to be, and fathers won't come between them. The young man's father will come round in time, when he sees he means business."

"That is just what I was going to say," eagerly chimed in Dolly, "and Mary and I can never thank you enough for speaking for us. Only give us a little time, Mr. Waddell—you would not make us both miserable—and I am sure my father will come round."

"I don't like it—I confess I don't like it at all. I should have been proud and pleased if Mr. Lamley had given his consent, for I like you, sir, and I wish you well, but——"

"Come, come, Waddell," said the venerable one, whose obstinacy was roused, and who was determined to

have his own way in the matter, "you do as I tell you, there can't be no harm in givin' of 'em a little time."

"Well, well, I suppose it must be so," said Mr. Waddell, unable to go against his father-in-law's vehemence, and Dolly's pleading, to say nothing of Mary's feelings, "but it is quite contrary to my idea of what is right in the circumstances, quite contrary; and mind you, young sir, I will have no underhand business; my daughter shall not be the gossip of St. Philip's. There shall be no engagement, you shall both be free as air. No meetings in the Park, or on the Pier, or anywhere else, and no letters passing. All I will say is this: that when you can come to me, and tell me that Mr. Lamley will receive my girl as a daughter, I will not withhold my consent from your marriage. Until then, I will trust to your honour to seek no interview with Mary, and not to write to her."

"The terms are hard, Mr. Waddell," said Dolly, dolefully, "but beggars must not be choosers, and I thank you for what you have said. As to meeting, of course we cannot help meeting sometimes, though my leave is nearly up, and that danger will, I am sorry to say, be at an end. But if we chance to meet, you cannot expect us not to speak?"

"He ain't so particular as all that comes to," said Mr. Wellings, with an encouraging smile.

"No, no, of course not," said the Mayor, also smiling, "I am not such a stern parent as that; what I mean is, I won't have any lovers' nonsense until the thing is definitely settled."

"Lover's nonsense! just hark to him!" exclaimed Mr. Wellings, "as if he wasn't as fond of my Louisa—why I can mind 'em now, a-sitting on the sofy a-holding of one another's hands as silly as silly; lovers' nonsense! bless my heart!" and the old man chuckled at the pictures his memory revived.

"May I tell Mary?" hesitated Dolly, in the forlorn hope that Mr. Waddell would grant him this as a last boon.

"Yes, let 'em have a word or two together, Waddell,"

urged the old gentleman, "don't be too hard-hearted, it ain't like you."

"Well, I suppose there will be no harm—" hesitated the Mayor, "but it must be the last," and with that he rose, and Dolly, after again shaking hands with and thanking his unexpected ally, was conducted through the swing door again, and spent a heavenly quarter-of-an-hour with the expectant Mary, for she had not failed to see him come in, and had been waiting the issue in trembling anxiety. Altogether things had turned out a great deal better than could have been expected, and the two lovers were beginning to take comfort, and to picture to themselves a bright and fortunate future, when Mrs. Waddell, who was all eagerness to see "Mary's young man," and had been fidgetting about outside the door for some minutes, after duly, and with a kindly forethought, rattling the door handle, turned it, and entered the room.

"Well!" she said, her face one broad, pleased smile, "so you young folks have stolen a march upon us. I am sure I wish you joy, and I hope as things will turn out comfortable for all parties." Here Dolly scored one in her good books by going up to her and giving her quite a filial kiss, so pleased was he with her kind sympathy. "Quite like a son," as she said to Mary, when Dolly had unwillingly taken his departure, "and as nice a looking a young man as ever I set eyes on; quite the gentleman, too, my dear. Well, time works wonders, as the saying is, and I hope his father will come round, for I like your choice very much indeed, Mary, and I am sure he's as good as he looks."

GEORGE LAMBERT.

(To be continued.)

A Georgian Magazine.

It is the fashion now, as it always has been, and probably always will be, to sneer at the past, and to plume ourselves on the great improvements we have made on the ways of our forefathers; but a brief glance at the pages of an old magazine, dated 1811, will suffice to show that, after all, there is nothing new under the sun, that human nature was the same then as it is now, and that in some ways we have not improved so very much, in spite of all our boasting.

The magazine before us is called *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions, and Politics*. This is what, in our modern slang, we should call rather "a large order," but the periodical in question justified its somewhat ambitious title. It was issued monthly, and was not only illustrated, but every month three or four small patterns of the fabrics then in use were gummed on to a page containing an allegorical engraving. These are now very interesting, and seem to give us a tangible hold of the past, to enable us to grasp the folds of our great-great-grandmother's skirts as their ghosts flit by. We feel and see what their dresses and pelisses were made of, just as we see what they liked to read about in those olden times, what interested them, what amused them, and lo! we find we, to judge from the ever-increasing mass of magazines of the end of the century, are interested and amused with very much the same kind of things that they were.

The *Repository* was intended, doubtless primarily, though by no means exclusively, for the fairer half of creation, for it was adorned each month with two fashion-plates. And here we mark a distinct advantage of the past over the present, for, foolish as some of the figures

are, they are infinitely better drawn than those badly-proportioned creations which disfigure the pages of half the ladies' papers of the present day.

In the beginning of the century, the designer of fashion-plates was apparently an idealist ; to-day, he or she is a realist with a sublime disregard for the human form divine. There were no fifteen-inch waists in those days, gowns and pelisses were loose, and, to judge from the illustrations of the *Repository*, very little clothing was worn underneath them ; the skirts cling so closely that some of the wearers look as if they were going to bed instead of to the opera.

The pelisse was a very pretty garment ; it was a sort of loose coat, reaching sometimes to the knees, sometimes to the edge of the skirt ; it was generally edged with fur down the fronts and all round the hem, and was made of cloth, velvet, or sarsenet, and was of various colours—red, violet, brown, yellow, blue, or green. If for out-door wear, the head-dress or hat was always, in 1811, of the same colour as the pelisse ; indeed, they appear to have exercised very good taste in those days in the blending of their colours.

A flower garden was not then considered an appropriate trimming for a hat ; one ostrich feather was frequently the only ornament on a hat or bonnet. Here and there we come upon a garment almost identical with those worn nowadays. One plate has a little zouave jacket, that might almost have been designed for last season, and another has a long fur boa, twisted round the throat just as we see it worn now.

The texture of the patterns of materials is beautiful ; we have not improved much in this respect. There are lovely silken gauzes, satins, sarsenets, velvets, cloths, and brocades. The colours in a few instances have faded, but for the most part they are as fresh and delicate as if sent from a modern shop. The weak part of these old fabrics was the pattern which adorned them ; the art of design was either unknown, or a fashion for little neat insignificant patterns prevailed.

In many instances the hair is dressed very much as it

is just at the present time, with bewildering short curls over the forehead, and a classic knob at the back ; but at the beginning of the year short corkscrew curls against the cheeks were worn, and the old English fly cap of red sarsenet trimmed with pearls was still an evening head-dress.

Long veils, like a short bridal veil, were thrown over a beaver bonnet sometimes, and sometimes they were wrapped round the head and part of the face, more like an oriental woman's ; but a great deal of coquetry appears to have been displayed in the arrangement of these veils, which were evidently intended to reveal rather than conceal the charms of the wearer.

In the matter of boots and shoes, our ancestresses appear to have studied what they conceived to be the beautiful, rather than their comfort or health or suitability. They walked abroad in shoes or boots the colour of their dresses or pelisses, and with the thinnest of soles. One lady is equipped for a walk in pale green shoes to match her zouave, which was then called a spencer. Buff kid boots were as fashionable then as tan leather are now. Buff silk boots are recommended for a carriage dress, and salmon-coloured kid shoes for an untrimmed walking-dress, while grass-green cloth boots adorn the feet of a lady in a carriage dress of grass-green cloth. The evening shoes were very dainty objects ; they were made of satin or silk or velvet, in delicate colours, ornamented with silver buckles or clasps. Long gloves were the fashion then as now, but they were generally made of white or pale tan-coloured kid, both for morning and evening.

Besides these dress fashions, every number had a plate of a fashionable piece of furniture, which was described and recommended, and the address of the shop where it could be obtained given in the letterpress ; this was evidently the great-grandfather of the modern advertisement. *Bonâ-fide* advertisements were in those days called "puffs," and there is an amusing article on the various forms of "puffing," in one number, giving some ironical instructions as to the best method of advertising

a hair restorer ; but what struck the writer as the height of absurdity, would in these days not be considered at all extravagant.

Indeed "Louis Pomade's Capillary Crescive" was evidently the ancestor of the modern Hair-Restorer, and worked effects as wonderful as its descendants are said to do. Irony was evidently a favourite form of humour, when the *Repository* was published. It abounds in a series of articles called the "Modern Spectator," which ran through six months, and also in another set of papers called "Instructions to a Young Lady on the Eve of Marriage," instructions, which if literally taken and acted upon, would in these days lead promptly to the Divorce Court, happily then unknown.

The "Modern Spectator's" articles are very clever, and must have been anticipated with much pleasure every month. He touched upon such popular subjects as Hymen, Cupid, the Lottery of Marriage, Life in the Country, Laughter and its Sources, and Taste; but he appears to have been in his best form when dealing with Marriage and Love, though he occasionally signed himself "An Old Bachelor." There appears to have been a dearth of husbands in those remote days, and one Arabella Languish writes to the "Modern Spectator" suggesting a scheme which she calls the "Lottery of Hymen" for the increase of marriages, which all men under thirty who were unmarried were to be compelled, under a heavy penalty, to join, and fathers of unmarried daughters were to be liable to the same penalty, if they did not send in their daughters' names to the "Lottery of Hymen."

We think Miss Arabella Languish was the great-great-grandmother of the Revolting Daughter of to-day ; apparently the worm was beginning to turn, even in the century's childhood.

"The Letters to a Young Lady on the Eve of Marriage," anticipated the Modern Woman with the instinct of genius, so much, that in reading them we are tempted to forget they were ironical, and we find ourselves taking them seriously. They are supposed to be

written to one Euphrasia from an aunt who had had two husbands, and was consequently in a position to speak with authority on matrimonial questions. Space will not permit us to do more than touch upon the very doubtful advice she gave her niece, who, we trust for her husband's sake as well as her own, did not act upon it.

Euphrasia's aunt was evidently a very Xantippe, an elder Katerina, a domestic tyrant, who ruled her two husbands with a tongue sharper than a sword; and we have no reason, from the perusal of her letters, to doubt her statement, "that one woman is more than a match for any man"; Euphrasia's aunt undoubtedly was. Touches of the humour of Mrs. Malaprop sparkle in her lively pages, which breathe throughout the spirit of revolt against domestic duties, the subjection of women, and above all, against submission to the husband. One little piece of advice which shows how Euphrasia's aunt anticipated events we must quote: "Establish a privy purse solely devoted to the discharge of your private wants," she writes. This was to be done not legally and by fair means, but by cheating in the household expenditure. The editor apparently considered this good lady's sentiments very dangerous, for at the conclusion of them he added a note, drawing attention to the ironical precepts laid down, considered in which light, he trusted the letters would do more good than harm. He was evidently a married man.

Another amusing feature of this periodical is a series of letters from Belinda, a young lady in London, to her sister in the country.

Verily there is no new thing under the sun; "vanitas vanitatis" was the law in Solomon's time, in Belinda's, in ours.

Belinda's letters touched on fashions and dress, on which topics she laid down the law with all the authority of a London girl writing to a country cousin or sister, and indeed devoted the greater part of her letters to these subjects so dear to the feminine world then as now. If she went to a fête, her chief occupation appears to have been to look at the dresses, and

afterwards to write an account of them to her sister in the country.

Even in those remote days women wrote novels, and one old lady in these quaint pages regretted "the fact with tears in her eyes." Poor old thing! what would she have done if she had lived in these days, when the woman who has not perpetrated a novel is the exception?

The *Repository* was, however, intended for men as well as women, and for their delectation it offered articles on British Sports; and every month it published quotations from the *London Gazette* and a list of all the bankrupts; a medical report, and a political article were also evidently intended for the stronger half of creation.

There was always a musical review of songs and pianoforte pieces; a chapter on the public amusements then going on in London, and a page or two of literary gossip, which, with names and titles altered, might have been taken out of to-day's papers. A page was also devoted to the money market, and another to meteorological reports.

Besides all this, an excellent series of papers on Iceland, with a description of that island, its inhabitants, their manners and customs, ran through the year; and an equally good series of Letters from Italy, rather stiffer reading than the papers on Iceland, appeared every month.

On the whole, many a less entertaining companion for a winter evening might easily be found than a volume of this old Georgian periodical.

DARLEY DALE.

Flamboyant's Ring.

CECIL FLAMBOYANT was a mystery to himself and to his acquaintances. Optimistic teleologists say that everything in Nature has its use ; but the Great Mother herself would have found it exceedingly difficult to point out what he was good for, if we except one accomplishment, of which more anon.

He was one of those tall, loose, raw-boned men, with sandy hair, freckled complexion, and stony imperturbable eyes of the most opaque blue, whose precise age no one could determine. He was not a golfer, nor a cyclist ; the perfervid game of lawn-tennis had no charms for him ; the partridges in the stubble, the grouse on the moor, the pheasant in the spinny, the little red fox in his shady cover, the speckled trout in the pool beneath the willow—in fact, all the *ferae naturae*, whose relentless enemy is Man, were perfectly safe so far as he was concerned. Nor was he a student ; the library was an apartment which he carefully eschewed, and not one of his acquaintances could aver with truth that he had ever seen Flamboyant engaged in the perusal of literature more ambitious than the daily paper—the *Morning Post*, of course—and certain books of travel.

For the rest, he was rich—very rich. Whence his fortune was derived was another mystery. There were certain dark and unholy rumours afloat which connected his deceased paternal relative with the rag and bone trade, but these rumours lacked confirmation, and Flamboyant himself always preserved a discreet silence upon that delicate point. His patronymic was not only architecturally significant—it pointed certainly to a French, perhaps to a Norman origin. Here, at least, he was by no means reticent, for he was wont to assert with much

pomposity that an illustrious ancestor of his had come over with the Conqueror and fought at Hastings—which famous field, be it observed *en passant*, must have been a veritable Armageddon, or battle of the nations, if the combatants on the Norman side were numerous enough to found the various families which have since claimed them as eponymous heroes. Mr. Flamboyant's detractors, however, surmised that the illustrious ancestor in question must have been a Rouen archer, and were wicked enough to whisper with a malicious grin something about "an inherited faculty for drawing the long bow."

Hypocrisy, we know, is the homage which vice pays to virtue; invitations to house-parties are equally the homage which birth, trembling on the verge of the unpardonable sin of impecuniosity, pays to wealth, albeit of unknown antecedents, in these degenerate days of ours; and the tall slouching figure of Flamboyant was a familiar sight in salons to which, in the good old times, only the undoubted possession of *sangre azul* would have been a passport.

No Nimrod, no rider, no shot, no angler, no student, our hero was, *en revanche*, a talker, a *raconteur*—and *such a raconteur!* *Facta, non verba* is generally the motto of men who *are* men, and, consequently, the eloquence of this masculine siren was but little appreciated by members of his own sex. It was at five o'clock tea—a feminine function not often affected in a country house by men, who are dispersed abroad, like so many Esaus, in pursuit of game—it was at five o'clock tea, we repeat, that you might observe Cecil Flamboyant in all his glory. To an attentive and admiring company of Desdemonas, young, middle-aged, and elderly, would this interesting Othello then recount, with all the circumstantiality of an Eastern story-teller, the moving adventures by field and flood, wherein he averred he had been a protagonist. If he might be credited, his peregrinations were as varied and extensive as those of Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew. The Diomed Islands in Behring Strait were as well known to him as the "sweet shady side of Pall Mall." He had thoughts of leading out a colony of kindred

spirits to the inhospitable shores of Spitzbergen, that delectable habitat which has hitherto been strangely disregarded in the general scramble for territory. He had established a league of perpetual amity with the virtuous Veddahs in the interior of Ceylon, and at sight of him the savage tribes of the Amazon would lower their bows and cast aside their *curare*-tipped arrows. He was, in fact, the Marco Polo, or the Mandeville, of the modern world.

* * * *

"Have I ever been in South Africa? Yes, I should rather think so. Do you see this ring? It recalls to me a weird and uncanny incident—to use the mildest terms—of my sojourn in the Dark Continent. You have read Rider Haggard's 'She,' of course? Well, I can assure you that its horrors are not all fictitious, and that there is really less exaggeration in that wonderful romance than you might fancy."

The scene was Cressingham Hall, the beautiful seat of the Earl of Cressingham; the time, that hour sacred to small talk, when the refreshing beverage that "cheers but not inebriates" is dispensed to thirsty souls by the ministering angels of the drawing-room; the speaker was, of course, Cecil Flamboyant.

"We should so like to hear all about it, if we may," simultaneously breathed a chorus of female voices, ranging in *timbre* from the somewhat gruff tones of Lady Montalt to the sweet, girlish soprano of the charming young *ingénue*, Violet Delisle.

The hero of the adventure bowed as he replaced his cup.

"Certainly, ladies," he said, "if you care to hear the story.

"It is a good many years ago now—in fact, I was only a boy at the time. We had some trouble with the Zulus—trouble which culminated in Isandula and Ulundi, and was farther accentuated by the frightfully tragic death of the gallant young Prince Imperial. A cousin of mine, whom I need not name—he was a distinguished cavalry officer, and subsequently earned his V.C. by an act of

unparalleled bravery and devotion—was out there with his regiment. Now, I had always burned for an experience in that Africa, which has ever been the habitat of all things wonderful; and, to make a long story short, as I was my own master, I took passage on board one of the Castle line of steamers, sailed on a fine May day from Dartmouth, and, on arriving at the Cape, went and found my cousin, much to his surprise.

"It so happened that, just at the point where he was then stationed, no immediate danger of an attack was apprehended. We knew that there was a Zulu impi somewhere about fifty miles north of us, but, worse luck, we did not trouble our heads much on that score. Youth is the season of foolhardiness.

"My cousin and I were both keen sportsmen, and, feeling free to follow our own devices, spent the most of our time on the 'veldt.' One day—shall I ever forget it?—we had ridden farther afield than usual, and, as the sun was westering, came upon a curious scene—a veritable valley of desolation. It seemed like the dry bed of a broad and mighty river. The ground was irregular and stony, and giant boulders were scattered thickly about. You might have fancied you were gazing at the *débris* of a ruined world. I have since visited spots in Australia that strangely reminded me of it.

"We reined in our horses, and paused to contemplate the weird prospect. As we were thinking of returning, the air was rent by a piercing yell from a hundred throats at once, and emerging from the cover of the rocks a band of Zulu warriors sprang upon us, brandishing their murderous assegais. It was a moment to make the bravest man 'hold his breath for a while.' Escape seemed utterly impossible, and resistance, we knew, was vain. It was just what happened to the Prince Imperial, fortunately without a similarly tragic result. A dozen hands dragged me from my horse. My cousin—thanks to good luck and the matchless speed, spirit, and endurance of his Arab, saved himself as by a miracle.

"Well, ladies, my savage captors bore me to their kraal. I had anticipated instant death, but my anxiety

on that head was somewhat relieved by a giant Zulu, an induna or chief, who managed to whisper in my ear—I had picked up a little of their language while with my cousin :

“‘Fear nothing ; you are safe.’

“My hands and feet were bound, but otherwise I was not badly treated by my foes, and when night fell I was invited to sit down by their camp-fire, where preparations for a Gargantuan meal were in full swing. Having been out all day on the ‘veldt’ without partaking of more substantial fare than a biscuit or two and a nip of brandy from my flask, I was simply and literally starving. The mess was served in a huge brazen caldron or pot in which it had been cooked, and exhaled the most appetising and savoury odour. Dispensing of necessity with knife and fork, I helped myself, like the rest, with my fingers. Just when my hunger had been pretty well appeased, and I was getting in consequence somewhat more fastidious in the selection and mastication of my food, I all at once felt something hard and metallic between my teeth. On removal it proved to be—a *button*. Full of vague and sickening surmises, I cast my eyes upon some bones which I had greedily picked and which were lying in a small heap beside me. Alas ! my worst fears were confirmed. In the ruddy glow of the fire I distinctly saw some glistening thing upon one of them. It was *a gold ring* !

“‘Gracious heavens !’ I ejaculated, ‘I am a cannibal. I have been feasting with these fiends on human flesh. Perhaps—most likely on that of a compatriot ! And then I wept, I raved, I stormed at the black grinning ghoulds. But no ; I cannot—I will not attempt to describe my feelings of horror, anguish, disgust. Suffice it to say that, innocent as I was, I have never forgiven myself for sharing—albeit unwittingly—in that fatal banquet.

“In the very height of my agony, out of the night came the clear inspiring note of the British bugle. A panic seized the Zulus, and they fled for their lives. My cousin rushed in at the head of a rescue party and

liberated me from my bonds. Before I left I drew off the ring—the ring which you now see—from the mangled finger. I have worn it to this day, and I still shudder when I look at it.”

Mr. Flamboyant paused.

“How interesting!” remarked Lady Montalt, who was fond of supping her fill upon devilled kidneys and any other available horrors.

“How very dreadful and sad!” sighed Violet Delisle, who simply overflowed with the milk of human kindness, which the world had not yet turned into whey.

“What ripping—I mean what thrilling experiences you have had, Mr. Flamboyant!” said the wealthy, lovely, and rather daring widow, Mrs. Bletchington, levelling, as she spoke, a killing glance from beneath her bold black brows at the fishy, inscrutable, and expressionless orbs of the narrator.

“Hang me if I know where to beat him for an Ananias!” growled *sotto voce* old Admiral Merewether, who, sitting ensconced behind a newspaper in a remote corner of the room, had been first an interested, then an incredulous, but all along an unnoticed hearer of the strange adventure of Mr. Flamboyant.

* * * *

“The scene is changed”—if we may so far quote from a well-known poem in a popular work on elocution. It is Nettesley Court in October; that month fatal to foliage and pheasants. Mr. Flamboyant is the guest of an American millionaire who hails from Chicago, has invested some of his porcine dollars in the purchase of one of England's historical mansions, and takes a keen delight in surrounding himself with members of England's aristocracy.

A blue-stocking of antiquarian tastes, and—oh, the pity of it!—slightly antiquated appearance, has just informed her less learned sisters, as they delicately nibble their cake and sip their tea, that it is St. Calixtus' Day, the anniversary of the fatal fight of Senlac, and strange to say, this remark does not seem to have evoked much interest.

Mr. Flamboyant, like a gallant squire of dames, came to the rescue.

"Our land," he observed thoughtfully and not irrelevantly, refraining for once, with a marvellous effort of self-control, from any allusion to the part taken by his distinguished progenitor in the Battle of Hastings—"Our land has seen so many masters—Briton, Roman, Saxon, Dane, Norman. How little its eventful annals resemble those of the sluggish, unchanging East—China, for instance, where things roll ever on in the same antediluvian groove, notwithstanding that sharp jog lately administered by the little Japs."

"Oh, do you know anything of China?" inquired the hostess, a lively Bostonian.

"As much as a 'foreign devil' may claim to know," was the modest response.

"You are such a traveller."

"Yes, a globe-trotter whose tales, unlike the proverbial travellers' yarns, are invariably true—actual experiences. Do you see this ring? I wear it as a reminiscence of one of China's strangest customs."

"Do tell, Mr. Flamboyant," supplicated the fair *citoyenne* of the "Hub of the Universe," eagerly seconded in her request by the rest of the ladies present.

"I was staying in Peking a few years ago," began the veracious traveller. "It was summer and the heat was terrific—95° in the shade most days. I happened to be sitting one afternoon by the *jalousie* of my apartment, trying to breathe and pretending to read, when a hubbub in the narrow and malodorous street below me arrested my attention. On looking out I saw a long procession of pigtailed—the *canaille* of Peking, to judge from their rascally looks—headed by a wretched criminal whose shaven skull projected from a heavy wooden frame or movable pillory, which encumbered his steps and almost dragged him to the ground. He was going to the gruesome Golgotha of Celestial justice to expiate some offence—probably enough, a trivial one; for human life is nothing accounted of in the Flowery Land. Beside him

marched the executioner, a gigantic Chinaman with a huge two-handled sword.

"As I looked on, partly in pity, partly in wonder, there suddenly stepped out of the crowd of bystanders that lined either side of the way a man who approached the culprit and whispered a few words in his ear. They were apparently of the nature of an interrogation, for I saw the doomed head in the yoke nodding and wriggling, as if in eager and emphatic assent. Thereupon the executioner and the other sinister-looking officials were communicated with and a halt was called. Money passed between the criminal and the man in the crowd, and then, to my unutterable amazement, the cumbrous frame was transferred to the neck of the latter, while the liberated prisoner went on his way rejoicing.

"Yielding to an irresistible impulse of curiosity, I left the window, rushed out into the street before the procession was resumed, and approaching the substitute in this strange proxy, begged him to explain the mysterious occurrence which I had just witnessed.

"'It is quite simple,' he answered. 'The man gave me ten taels to take his place. I care nothing for life; I long for the eternal rest of Buddha; and my wife will have a good time with the money.'

"The coolness, the philosophic cynicism of the fellow, who valued his life at only £3, astonished me quite as much as the curious law which sanctioned his procedure. Seeing a ring on his finger, I said, 'I will give you another ten taels for your ring, which I should like to wear as a souvenir of the most extraordinary incident which I have as yet witnessed in this extraordinary land.'

"The bargain was struck, and this, ladies, is the ring."

The general chorus of admiration and delight was interrupted by the violent slam of the drawing-room door; for fate had ordained that Admiral Merewether, as well as Mr. Flamboyant, should be a guest of Mr. Jonathan Jacox, and the valetudinarian tar, who, as on a former occasion, had lain *perdu* during the recital, had

incontinently bolted in wrath and disgust at the conclusion of the second legend of the ring.

* * * *

Our story shifts its quarters once more, and this time to "gallant little Wales." Fortune, cruel and perverse goddess, "*ludum insolentem ludere pertinax*," has unconscionably brought together once more the famous traveller, Cecil Flamboyant, and the hardened old sceptic, Admiral Merewether, at Plas Clwyd, where Sir David Glendower exercises princely hospitality amidst Cambrian wilds.

A strident voice, too well remembered, breaks in upon the Admiral's siesta one drowsy summer afternoon. Is he awake? or is it some hideous dream, engendered of a heavy luncheon? He sits erect on his fauteuil in an agony of dread expectancy. Alas! it is all only too real. The usual formula salutes his ear, the usual ring is brought into requisition, and he is in for a third legend.

"You see this ring? Thereby hangs a tale. Five years ago I was on a sporting tour in Nepal. The pursuit of big game, ladies, constitutes the passion of my life. Twenty elephants, thirty tigers, forty leopards, fourteen bears, sixteen panthers, eighteen Indian bisons, and as well as I remember, forty-five cheetahs, not to mention countless antelopes, had fallen to my gun.

"My host was the Nawab of Chutneypore. Before my departure he organised an entertainment on a large and magnificent scale in my honour. It took place within a spacious pavilion of white marble, which was built in the centre of a tank or artificial lake in the immense forest-like grounds which encircled the Nawab's palace. This fairy pleasure-house was of rectangular shape, and was surmounted by a graceful cupola, which, on that memorable evening, shone radiant in the Eastern moonlight, standing out from a dark background of cypresses. No, I shall never forget the subtle magic of the scene. It recalled to my mind at the time Coleridge's gorgeous opium-dream of Kubla Khan. A causeway of red sandstone connected the pavilion with the shore of the miniature lake in which it stood. Four broad windows, or rather unglazed apertures, adorned with delicate

carven traceries, fine as the filigree of Malta, faced respectively the four points of the compass, and were draped from top to bottom with hangings of rich crimson silk, heavily embroidered with arabesques in gold. These curtains—for the night was sultry—were looped aside to admit the cool refreshing air from the surrounding water.

"I sat at the right hand of the Nawab; on his left was his favourite son, a child of seven or eight years, with the face of Kama, the Hindu Cupid, and the soft, olive complexion of an angel of Murillo.

"The entertainment was just at its height when suddenly the view of the moonlit heaven through the window-space facing the causeway was obscured by a huge, dark form, and the next moment a tiger was in our midst.

"The bloodthirsty monster made straight for the boy, seized him, and bounded with his victim into the night.

"A scene of indescribable horror and confusion ensued; shrieks and groans succeeded the gay laughter and merry conversation of a moment before; the unhappy father was paralysed with grief, and all stood powerless in the face of that hideous calamity.

"Thank heaven, I was equal to the emergency. Snatching a *tulwar* from one of the Nawab's guards, I leaped through the window at which the savage brute had entered and disappeared, rushed with lightning speed along the causeway, and overtook him just as he had gained the fringe of the forest which adjoined the lake.

"I flung myself upon him. With my left hand I caught him by the throat in an iron grip, as I lifted the weapon in my right. In a trice the descending point of the *tulwar*, urged with all the energy of despair, pierced the *medulla oblongata*, and with a spasm and a groan the formidable man-eater fell dead at my feet. I raised the child, who was insensible, but happily uninjured, and never paused till I had placed him in his father's arms

"Ladies, I shall never forget the touching gratitude of that Indian prince. He wept, he embraced me, he called me his Vishnû, his preserver. First, he adjured me to accept the half of his dominions, then the whole, then the loveliest of his wives ; and finally, as the most precious gift of all, he actually offered me his mother ! But I was resolute in declining all his proffers, especially the last. I was an Englishman, and had simply done my duty towards my friend and entertainer. I had admired a fine cornelian ring which he wore, and at last, to rid myself of his importunities, said that I would accept it as a token of his thankfulness and a memento of the most thrilling crisis in my adventurous life.

"Here it is !"

The hero was about to receive his usual ovation when a deep and angry growl was heard. Had another tiger escaped from some travelling menagerie and entered un-awares that stately Cambrian home, sent thither by chance to avenge the fate of its congener ? No ; it was Admiral Merewether, whose patience was at last exhausted by the *crambe repetita* wherewith he had thrice been dosed, and who now, stalking forth from his corner with such dignity as his gouty limbs admitted of, confronted the shrinking Flamboyant and his bevy of fair worshippers. His countenance, always rubicund, literally flamed with indignation as, pointing the finger of denunciation at the Master of the Ring, he shouted in stentorian tones, which, on more than one occasion of deadly stress and peril, had defied "the battle and the breeze," when England's fleet had sailed the Baltic during the Crimean War :

"*That man is a liar!*"

W. B. WALLACE, B.A.

The Innkeeper of the Landes: A True Story.

"EH! but Auguste was right," sighed the young *commis voyageur* to himself as he trotted along the straight, apparently interminable post-road across the Landes. It looked just as it had done an hour or two before: the road just as straight, the poplars which bordered it on each side just as stiff and scraggy.

"Poplars certainly are depressing," he went on, "but they are useful, especially in the dusk, as one might get off the track and be lost on the brown, sandy heath. Truly, it is not a cheerful prospect. Surely I must be half-way by this time, but there is no sign of a house, and by all accounts the entertainment is not likely to be of the best when I get there. However, good or bad, it must do. Didn't Auguste say that the landlord was a Spaniard or something of the sort? And he had a sickly wife when he first came, but she died some years ago; and there is a daughter who waits and an old woman who cooks, and is as taciturn as her master. *Mais!* What an existence for a young girl! Shut out from the world and seeing no one but an occasional pedlar or a rare *commis voyageur* belated like myself and forced to spend the night there against his will. I have managed badly; Auguste never stays the night."

M. Léon jogged on for another quarter-of-an-hour, and then at last caught sight of the solitary, two-storeyed inn he was looking for.

"Ah! good evening, Monsieur! Can I have a bed for the night?" he cried, as he rode into the courtyard where the landlord was feeding his ducks.

"To be sure! Monsieur and his horse could both have the best accommodation," said Gervais, coming forward with alacrity to welcome his guest, whom he ushered with

much ceremony past the smoke-blackened kitchen, where a few peasants were drinking their usual *chopine* of wine, and into the large travellers' room, whose long tables and benches, reaching from end to end, were entirely unoccupied.

M. Léon threw down his knapsack, asked for a bottle of wine and ordered dinner. The landlord disappeared to execute his orders and attend to the horse, and soon after Nanette, his daughter, came in to lay the cloth.

M. Léon turned and looked at her with interest. "Rather a pretty girl," she had promised to be when last his friend Auguste came that way; but, if so, she must have changed.

"Poor thing! she must be dying of *ennui* in this wilderness! She has even forgotten how to speak, apparently," said M. Léon to himself, finding that his polite little speeches elicited no response—not even so much as a smile or a blush. Apparently she had not understood his innocent little compliments, but she had certainly heard, for she looked at him with an odd expression on her pale face—an expression which he could not in any way interpret and yet which made him almost shiver.

How very pale she was, and how languidly and listlessly she moved—as if she took no interest in her duties, or, indeed, in anything else.

"Dying of *ennui*!" said M. Léon to himself again, with a thrill of compassion. "She can't be above eighteen. Mademoiselle!"

But Nanette had vanished, and the landlord returned to see that Monsieur was properly served and had all that he wanted.

"Guests are few in these parts," he remarked, "and we must make the most of them. Yes; carriages stop to change horses, and travellers come in for a meal, but mostly pedlars—not Monsieur's sort. But I make bold to say that Monsieur will not regret his mistake. Seldom are we honoured by the presence of a guest so distinguished; but Monsieur will have no fault to find with his dinner or his bed. Monsieur, no doubt, is from Paris, and it would be charming to hear the news from him."

Once started, the conversation seemed to be in no danger of flagging. Gervais was eager to hear, and M. Léon very ready to tell, all the news he could; though he explained that he lived chiefly at Tours and was, indeed, travelling for one of the houses there and anxious to get on as fast as possible.

"Monsieur will be starting early to-morrow then, no doubt," suggested Gervais.

"By daybreak, if I can."

Just then there was a call for the landlord, who went out; and Nanette, who had returned a minute or two before but remained in the background, now came up to the table and began smoothing the cloth and arranging and re-arranging the knives, forks and glasses, solely for the sake of something to do it seemed. M. Léon wasted no more pretty speeches on her, for she took no more notice of him than if he had been a chair. Her face was turned away from him now, and she was leaning across the table doing something to the water-bottle, and he watched her idly because he had nothing better to do.

"If you have any money with you, take care! Be on your guard!"

The words were uttered in a low, hurried whisper, which chilled the traveller to the bone, though they did not seem to be addressed to himself, for Nanette had not even glanced in his direction, but was now watching the door with an anxious expression of countenance. Either he had misunderstood, or she was crazy and had been talking nonsense to the decanter.

"*Mademoiselle*," he began a little uneasily, "*Mademoiselle, mille pardons*, but——"

She did not turn her head, but again there was the quick, low whisper—low, but distinct—"Don't stay here." It was spoken to the air this time, and without a look or glance she was gone.

The next moment the landlord came back, scolding, and apologising for his daughter's want of manners; and, hoping that Monsieur would find all to his liking, prepared to keep him company during the meal, which was now placed upon the table.

"Mademoiselle your daughter looks pale and languid," began M. Léon politely, when the landlord, evidently much annoyed, referred again to her slowness and dulness with many apologies. "Perhaps——"

"Ah! Monsieur is too good to make excuses for her; but Monsieur has the quick eye, and, in fact—well, the next time I go into the town Nanette goes with me to see the doctor. There is something wrong—wrong here, I am afraid"—and he tapped his forehead significantly. "Jeanne, the *bonne*, tells me that she mutters strange things in her sleep, and just lately she has walked again in her sleep—a bad sign. A motherless girl is a great charge in an out-of-the-way place like this."

"Mademoiselle needs companions," said the young man, rather absently, as he played with his knife and fork.

"Precisely—but Monsieur is eating nothing, yet the omelette——"

"Excellent! couldn't be better," M. Léon assured him, hastily, "but somehow I have lost my appetite."

"Monsieur has waited too long," said Gervais with vexation, "but the chicken is worth trying."

M. Léon made a gallant effort to dispose of the chicken, and little by little, as Gervais talked on, recommending now this, now the other, and taking the liveliest interest in his guest's dinner, M. Léon's appetite somewhat improved. He could not quite shake off the impression of those two "creepy" whispers, even though they were not meant for himself; but he was much reassured by his host's explanation of his daughter's strange look and manner. The place was enough to make anyone melancholy; no doubt she was a little crazed, and he would be careful to fasten his door at night. Crazy folks had strange fancies, and she might even take it into her head to rob him herself, in spite of her mysterious warning. One had heard of such things.

M. Léon chatted away to his host, told him how he had heard of him from his friend Auguste, and was in his turn well entertained by the stories Gervais told.

He had well-nigh forgotten the mysterious Nanette, when she glided in to clear away, and again provoked her not too patient father by the aimless way in which she hovered about the table, coming and going a dozen times where one would have done.

"Go to Jeanne, she wants thee, and thou hast nothing more to do here," said the latter at last; and Nanette's white face vanished, and was not seen again.

"And now," said M. Léon, when he had answered a variety of questions about Auguste, and been entrusted with many complimentary messages, "now I will pay my horse a visit, if you please."

"But why should Monsieur trouble himself? the horse is well cared for."

"I don't doubt it; but, pardon, I always visit him, he expects it," said M. Léon gravely.

As he walked across the courtyard, he lingered a moment or two, asking some question about the nearest town, while he glanced rapidly round the premises, and noticed that the gate had no lock, and was secured only by bolts. His horse had been well attended to, as the landlord protested; and, hanging his saddle near the stall, M. Léon returned to the inn, where he was entertained by the landlord until he retired to his bedroom. Nanette he did not see again.

"H'm," said he to himself, when the landlord had departed, and he could make a careful survey of the apartment, "only one door, and that," as he turned the key, "has a very good lock. And the windows?"

Two French windows looked into the court below—one had a fastening, the other none.

"Ha! and it would be easy to enter by the roof of the shed below, with the aid of a pair of steps. Mademoiselle does not look as if she had the energy, but with crazy people one never knows."

Again he looked round the room. No, there was no closet or cupboard, no possible place of hiding—nothing but bare white walls, which could not conceal any secret door. Still it would be as well to be on the safe side, and securing his bank-bills in a handkerchief round his

waist, he lay down on the bed without taking off more than his coat.

* * * *

The night was dark, and the silence was positively oppressive. M. Léon had been dosing uneasily for an hour or two, when he was roused by a noise, so slight, that at another time he would not have noticed it at all. He raised himself on his elbow and listened intently. There were steps, stealthy steps, coming down the passage; they had stopped at his door, and now he could detect the rustle of petticoats.

This re-assured him, and his heart beat less rapidly.

"Ah! *la pauvre!*" he muttered compassionately, "she ought to be in an asylum."

Two or three minutes passed, then the steps moved on, and he heard a door at the end of the passage softly closed.

M. Léon composed himself again to sleep, feeling a good deal relieved in mind, and was just passing into the land of dreams, when a breath of cool air blowing on his face, once more thoroughly aroused him.

The window was evidently open, but he had the presence of mind to remain perfectly still and not even turn his head to look. Some one was in the room—moving across it, too, to where he had laid his coat and knapsack—returning to the window again—leaping out upon the roof of the shed.

M. Léon rose quickly, and was in time to see the innkeeper walk along the shed-roof, and disappear down a short ladder, at the foot of which was a dark lantern.

Quick as thought M. Léon made up his mind. There was no money in coat or knapsack, and if that were his object, Gervais would certainly return, and that shortly.

"*La pauvre!* she has done her best to warn me," he thought.

Softly he opened his door, groped his way downstairs, and going to one of the front windows, furtively watched his chance of escape. Before long he saw Gervais mount the ladder again and step upon the roof of the shed. In

two minutes he would find the bed empty and his bird flown. What then? There was no time to be lost!

It was the work of a few instants to unfasten the window, leap down into the yard, snatch away the ladder and make for the stable. His saddle was where he had left it, and in a few moments more, he and his horse were flying across the Landes through the darkness.

Before the day was out the police of the nearest town had heard all that he could tell them concerning M. Gervais the innkeeper, and were bent upon finding out as much more as they could for themselves.

And yet when, a few weeks later, M. Léon came that way again and stopped to make enquiries, he was not a little chagrined and shocked, too, at what he heard. For the police suggested, with smiling politeness, that he must have dined that night not wisely but too well, it was evident!

They had made the most searching investigation, they had interrogated the peasants who frequented the inn; but all concurred in giving the innkeeper the best of characters. A tragedy had indeed taken place at the inn on the very day of M. Léon's hasty departure, but Gervais, poor man, was not in any way responsible, and, in fact, he was inconsolable. This was how it was—for M. Gervais had been as frank as possible, and his evidence had been corroborated by his housekeeper and by a couple of peasants who had chanced to make an early call at the inn—he, Gervais, deposed that he had been astir before anyone else in the house that morning, and had been somewhat alarmed to find one of the downstairs windows open. Not missing anything in the house, he had made the tour of the outside premises, found the gate wide open and the traveller's horse gone. He was relieved when he found that the traveller, too, was missing, and remembered that he had said he should be off, probably, by day-break. Still, he thought it would have been more *comme il faut* if the young monsieur had given himself the trouble to close the gate and the window. And why depart by the window at all, when the door was quite at his service? If he were a suspicious man, he

might be disposed to think that monsieur had his reasons for this strange departure; but he had paid his bill over-night.

"*Tiens! ce pauvre petit* Monsieur, he was frightened. *Voilà!* he had, perhaps, the *cauchemar*; perhaps he heard *cette pauvre* walking in her sleep. *Hélas! la pauvre Nanette!* what she has made me suffer! Never shall I forget it—never! Well, then, to continue:

"When my poor daughter and the *bonne* came down, I said—shortly and gruffly enough, for I was a little annoyed, 'Our bird is flown.' Maturin heard me. How could I guess that my poor daughter had so terrible an *idée fixe* in her poor, confused head? Monsieur had, perhaps, taken her fancy. I was careful not to leave them alone, for she was peculiar, *la pauvre*, especially of late; but I was called away for a few minutes, and what do I know? Monsieur made, perhaps, some of the pretty speeches which mean nothing, but are not the less dangerous. Well, Nanette went suddenly white when she heard that monsieur was gone, white as the wall, and she seized me by the arm, crying:

"'Did you mean to murder him, too? *Have* you murdered him, perhaps?'

"It was too terrible! and—may the saints pardon me!—I shook her off, the poor child, and asked her *que diable* what she meant. Maturin heard me, for he had just come in. And then, the poor Nanette, she said again those terrible words and flew upstairs with a wild shriek, fearful to hear, and bolted herself into her own room. *Hélas!* how can I tell the rest?—it is too cruel! My daughter did not show herself all the morning, and I left her alone, thinking that her fit of humour would pass. Then at noon came the labourers, and Jeanne wanted help in serving them and grew cross. She called, but Nanette did not answer, and she came to me complaining. I called and called—still no answer. I was angry—yes, I confess it—I was enraged at the poor child's obstinacy, and I went upstairs determined to bring her to her senses. I knocked, I kicked at the door; still silence, silence as of the grave. I burst the door open, and stumbled in head first. Never shall I forget the

sight which met my eyes—never! There was my daughter, the poor Nanette—dead, quite dead. She had hanged herself!”

“What!” cried M. Léon, horrified, “the poor girl had killed herself?”

“As Monsieur says,” replied the official, “and it explains much. Mademoiselle was crazy, undoubtedly, and should have been under surveillance. Impossible to account for the fancies of crazy people. Perhaps she had even read some romance of a lonely inn, and, having nothing to distract her, it had impressed itself on her mind. Monsieur is probably as sensitive, and she impressed her fancy upon him. *Voilà tout!* it is quite simple, as Monsieur sees, and a nightmare would do the rest. M. Gervais does not dispute that his daughter may have meant to warn Monsieur by her tragic whispers—it is, indeed, most likely—but the danger was imaginary, and existed only in two excited brains *en rapport* one with the other. Monsieur, no doubt, heard mysterious steps come to his door, and, *pardon*, the rest is easily accounted for!”

“But my coat and knapsack—they were taken from my room! I did not dream that.”

“Left behind by Monsieur in his haste, and quite at his service!”

There they were, sure enough—not a single article missing! M. Léon felt small, very small, as he left the police-station.

For obvious reasons, he avoided passing the inn of M. Gervais on his return journey, and when he told the story to his friend Auguste, the latter so clearly agreed with the police that he felt quite ashamed of himself.

And yet, from time to time, he could not help wondering whether the cold currents of air which he had felt on his face as he lay on his bed at the inn had existed only in a dream. If so, it was the most vivid dream he had ever had in his life.

But then, the window had no fastening; it might have blown open. Of course, no doubt that was it!

* * * *

Several years passed, and then, once again, it fell to M. Léon's lot to go the round which had before taken him across the Landes.

"Take care, *mon ami*," laughed Auguste, as they parted. "I would pass the inn in broad daylight this time, if I were you—at a gallop, even! It would be safer."

It was noon when M. Léon reached the inn this time, and he had intended to pass it without making any halt. The neighbourhood had altered since his last visit; the district had become more prosperous, more houses had been built, travellers had increased in numbers, and a railway was being made across the Landes close to the old inn, into which the navvies were just now flocking for their mid-day meal.

The landlord was at the gate, and bowed politely as M. Léon came up. But the landlord was not M. Gervais!

"M. Gervais?" said he, in answer to the traveller's inquiry, "*mais non*! The railway frightened him away more than a year ago."

"Indeed! How?"

"One of his fields was wanted, but he refused to sell at any price. He had his reasons. At last the authorities interfered, and ordered the work to proceed. The line was marked out, and that was all he ever saw of it. He at once packed his saddle-bags and rode away, giving out that he was going on a journey of some weeks, and leaving the *bonne* in charge. On reaching the town he drew all his money—and he was rich, *ce M. Gervais*, rich and respected oh, yes! highly respected—and then he proceeded to Bordeaux, where he sold the horse, and the police have not been able to trace him further. Yes, he was 'wanted,' Monsieur, for he had left something behind him—thirteen bodies in the field yonder—the last a pedlar, buried with his box and staff beside him. The *bonne* was arrested, but she was stone-deaf; they could make nothing of her, and let her go. Monsieur will give himself the trouble to dismount and taste the wine?"

And M. Léon followed the new landlord into the well-remembered room, murmuring :

“ *La Nanette ! la pauvre Nanette !* Shall I some day thank her ? ”

S. GAYE.

A Duel and a Dupe; or, The Chateau in the Forest.

"SHE is married," said my mother, her voice trembling.

I think she expected me to fly into a passion. What she knew of my suffering I cannot tell, but suddenly, in her emotional way, she burst out sobbing and threw her arms about me.

"When?" I asked, scarcely heeding her.

"Three months ago," she answered.

"Three months ago! Three months ago I had a letter from her as full of affection as any she ever wrote."

"Ah! the perfidy!" cried my mother, and there was a flash in her mild eyes.

She of whom we spoke was my French cousin, Céleste de Livron, the girl who for years after her parents' death had resided with my mother at our old place in County Down. Céleste was still rather young for marriage when my regiment was ordered to India, else she would have gone with me as my wife—at least so she had said to me.

I had returned home invalided after a bad attack of fever to find her the wife of another—and that other!

"Had you no suspicion of the sneaking, skulking villain?" I asked my mother, passionately.

"No real suspicion—how could I? I remember I remonstrated once with her when I thought his attentions too marked; but she only laughed, and told me I was imaginative. Ah! Roderick, she was very unworthy of a good man's love. Pierre Duclos' great riches tempted her, and she deceived me too cleverly—and you——"

"Hush, mother! Not a word against her! It is all

the doing of that scoundrel. A man who could induce a girl to elope with him when he knew she was engaged to the son of the woman whose hospitality he was enjoying—bah! it is too despicable for words. But you may depend upon one thing—he'll have to answer to me for this!"

"Oh, Rod, Rod! 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.'"

My mother seemed afraid for me. Well, if she could read anything of my inmost feelings, she had cause.

"'Vengeance!' The very sound of it is sweet," I said.

"Oh! my darling son, believe me there is no bitterness, no suffering in life like that which is born of satisfied vengeance."

I had seldom known my mother to speak so emphatically, she was usually so gentle. Yet what could she know of the truth of such a statement? It was a mere platitude on her lips.

Those first days at Ryan Lodge after my return will stand to my account in Purgatory, I believe.

Everywhere I seemed to see Céleste. Every room in the house, every spot in the grounds, had associations which tortured and maddened me.

On the fourth day I confessed something of this to my mother, when I told her I meant to join a shooting party in Scotland for a few weeks. She looked at me with eyes full of pity, and I knew she longed for my society after my three years' absence; but she made no objections, and I loved her the more for her unselfishness.

On my passage across the Irish Channel, a sudden dislike to the idea of mixing with my old associates took hold of me. I felt that their society would be quite unendurable, and as soon as the steamer landed I wired an excuse and apology, and took train to London in place of Inverness. In town I spent several days indulging my misery, and brooding over my wrongs.

Instead of being calmed by solitary meditation, my passion for revenge strengthened, and giving way to it, I set out for my cousin's place in France—not, of course,

to the new home of Céleste, but to the small estate of an uncle of her's, who was second cousin to my mother.

From my boyhood, when I had met Raoul de Livron at the château of an aunt of mine in the Côte d'Or, I had had a strong liking for the strange man, and to him I went at the present juncture.

I expected to find him, as I had found him before, leading the life of a recluse in the old country house among the vineyards. I knew it was scarcely time for his annual awaking from the torpid state of body and mind which characterised him unless when following the chase. Hunting was the one passion of his aimless life. It never failed to transform "that sad specimen of indolence and *ennui*," as his relatives thought him, into a virile fellow and as good a boon companion as a sportsman could desire.

True, he was subject to occasional fits of silence even on his hunting expeditions, but to me there was nothing distasteful in that; I could have recommended it to many for imitation in that country of excessive volubility.

At the gates of Raoul's house one of those chance encounters happened to me in which we seem to see the finger of fate. Through the golden haze of the early autumn afternoon a closed carriage approached. It was being driven at a rapid pace. As it turned out of the gates, I caught sight of a face which caused me to draw a painful breath. It was the face of Céleste, but not that of a happy woman.

Whether she had recognised me I could not tell. Her husband's place was in the neighbourhood, yet I had not thought to meet her here, and so soon.

I walked slowly on to the house, where another surprise awaited me. Monsieur de Livron was from home. The old butler on recognising me, at once bade me enter, and soon explained to me the reason of his master's absence.

"Monsieur Ryan knows the dislike of my master to have his privacy invaded, and the charming young Madam, his niece, came here frequently—too frequently—and alas! Monsieur de Livron had *ennui* so severe.

'I must depart, Alphonse,' he said, 'I will kill something in the mountains to cure myself.'"

The day following found me on my way to the shooting lodge in the Juras.

I felt I could not use the house among the vineyards wherein to carry out my plans of vengeance during the absence of its owner.

This was not my first visit to the hunting lodge amid the forests, but on reaching my destination, I was struck quite as forcibly as I had been on a previous occasion by the air of sinister gloom which pervaded it, and by its remoteness from civilisation. The dense dark forest, and the meagre pastures of this elevated spot, were in strong contrast to the rich vinelands I had just left. I looked at the Château, so grey and stern, at the belt of forest and the dreary fields, and felt a sense of kinship with the wild and lonely place.

Old Raoul was seated at the open fire in the lofty stone hall when I entered. In his hand was a gun he had been cleaning—it fell to the floor with a clatter as he recognised me, and sprang forward to greet me. His clasp of my fingers made them tingle. "My boy," he cried, "but this is the pleasantest of surprises."

I need not have feared for my welcome.

A few commonplaces followed as we stood together by the pine-wood fire. I knew he was studying me narrowly, but once only did our eyes meet. His servant Jean had announced that my room was ready.

"Aye, my dear Roderick, so you have come to shoot with me!" said his master. It was not the words so much as the emphasis of eyes and voice that told me Cousin Raoul was fully aware of the purpose which had brought me hither.

We had no opportunity of discussing it that evening, however, as the head forester came in and interrupted our *tête-à-tête* after dinner, and being tired after my journey, I retired early.

Next morning an event occurred which surprised me not a little. Cousin Raoul and I were on the point of setting out with our guns for an hour or two in the forest,

when a carriage drove into the courtyard, and from it descended no other than Céleste.

Utter amazement was the dominant expression on all three faces as we stood regarding each other. Yet in spite of her look my impression was that Céleste had known of my presence here. What in the name of mystery had tempted her to so foolish and compromising a step?

After a faint word of nervous greeting, she turned from me and addressed herself to Monsieur de Livron. Perhaps she found my stony look a trifle disconcerting. If I looked as I felt, it was enough to have turned her also into stone.

She was whispering to De Livron, but I heard every syllable. I drank in the sound of her voice as a thirsty man drinks water from a well in the desert.

"I never dreamed but you were here alone, uncle, as usual," she said. "I was in trouble, I had no one to advise, no one at all, and I came to you."

Poor little soul, she is in trouble already, I thought, and I had no doubt the blame lay with the scoundrel she had married.

I daresay something of my distress showed in my face. I was conscious presently of Raoul de Livron's eyes fixed on mine with an expression which somehow acted on me like a mental tonic. It said so plainly—will you let yourself be fooled so easily?

"You will excuse me, Roderick, till I learn what I can do for Madam," De Livron said in his stateliest but coldest manner as he led her indoors.

Later on I drew from him an account of their interview. Céleste, complaining of great fatigue, had first of all burst into tears. When these had subsided, she proceeded to make some definite charges of cruelty and neglect against her husband.

Her uncle had been far too severe with her I thought. He had spoken straight out in his blunt way, telling her she knew the sort of man M. Duclos was before she married him, and it was now her duty to make the best of her bargain. At this she had wept again unrestrainedly, and I did not wonder. It was a cruel experi-

ence for the girl, who had never known a harsh word before she married.

"You do not seem to realise my position," she said.

"Perfectly, madam," he had replied, and I found it hard to forgive his harshness to her, although I knew it sprang from his warm championship of my own cause. "Perfectly, madam! you are discontented with the result of your own actions, and that has led you to take a step which you will find it difficult to explain to your husband."

"I had no idea Rod was here," she had insisted, passionately.

"No matter, the result will be the same."

"Pierre may try to divorce me," she had cried with an hysterical laugh.

"I think it probable, madam."

"Well, let him!" she had retorted; and then he knew that reasoning was useless.

He told me all this in order to warn me of my danger.

"She insists she is too ill to leave the Château. I cannot drive her out. What am I to do with this mad woman?"

"I'll go. She must rest here till she has recovered."

I answered more perhaps for his sake than my own. There was a fierce struggle going on between my love for Céleste and my reason, which told me plainly enough she was unworthy of that love.

Cousin Raoul seemed relieved.

"But you will return as soon as she has departed." And I promised, for I had still that matter to arrange which had brought me here.

It was decided I should descend to the nearest village and put up at the little inn.

I flung a few things into my valise and set off almost directly. Raoul came a little way with me.

"I honour you, my boy; it is the case of a second Joseph," he said, as he bade me "*au revoir*." I almost felt that I hated him. My mind was in a terrible ferment.

I had gone swinging down the rocky path for about a mile when I met a horseman ascending at a leisurely pace. The astonishment of this rider was mixed with

trepidation, I fancy, when we mutually recognised each other.

As for me, all the pain and rage of the past days seemed to gather like a furious maelstrom when I found myself in the presence of Pierre Duclos. He read danger in my look, I suppose, for he would have ridden past me had I not laid my hand upon his bridle.

Around us was the dense forest, a great silence, and no human creature near. He knew I could not have found a more favourable spot in which to take a coward's vengeance upon him, had I sought for it. Being himself a dastard, I have no doubt he looked for some dastard's trick from me; but I kept my passion within bounds.

"Take your hand from my bridle," he cried, his voice trembling.

"Not till I have told you what I think of you, Monsieur Pierre Duclos."

"Hands off, or I'll strike you," he shouted.

"Strike!" I said. But the coward only shifted in his saddle.

I held him there while I said all I had to say to him in language far more forcible than polite; at least, in the ears of a gentleman. And he never attempted to defend himself against the ugly truth.

"You speak as a defeated man must," he merely remarked with a sneer and a shrug.

"I speak as a man should to a despicable cur, who, if he has one drop of honest blood in him will wipe out that insult with it!"

"That is a challenge, Monsieur Ryan?"

"What else? Monsieur is unusually slow of comprehension."

"The slower the better for you," he cried, with an attempt at bluster. In a few seconds it was arranged and he rode on.

Of his wife's proximity no mention had been made. I thought of this as I wended my way up the hill once more. It was evident he was uncertain of her whereabouts, and he had not questioned me lest I should dis-

cover the fact. I daresay meeting me on my way from the Château had made him doubt if he were on the right scent.

Raoul de Livron came towards me across the courtyard. Pierre Duclos had arrived but was nowhere visible. My host ordered a servant to take my bag indoors, and linking his arm through mine he led me across a field towards the belt of forest. Neither of us spoke till we stood among the green and solemn shadows of the ancient trees. Then it was he who broke the silence.

"Is this not a suitable spot?" He pointed as he spoke to a smooth grassy glade.

"It could not be better," I answered. There was no need for explanations; my host understood what I had returned for.

"It is the most strange coincidence," he said musingly.

"What is?"

"That you—her son—should come to fight a duel here upon this spot."

I was completely mystified.

"She, your mother, has never told you then the romance of her youth?"

"No; tell it me."

"Nay, where she is silent it is not for me to speak."

I could not press him further, and it occurred to me my curiosity would probably never be satisfied. It was doubtful if I should ever see her again. The thought of her grief, if the worst were to happen, gave me a cruel pang; yet, not for that would I hesitate to pay my enemy his due.

"Poor mother! If I fail it will break her heart. Promise me you will do what you can to comfort her, cousin Raoul," I said.

"I!" he exclaimed. "I can do nothing. She will hate me worse than before."

"Well, we need not look on the gloomy side. If I run my sword through him it will be all right."

"All right! Ah, Roderick, you have some things to learn yet. There is no bitterness, no suffering in life, like that which is born of satisfied vengeance."

"Why, how strange! My mother made use of these very words to me before I left home."

"Ah, did she? Well, I once wrote them to her. *Ciel!* How she is doomed to suffer."

"Then would you advise me to consider my mother's feelings before the call of honour?"

"No man should advise another on such a point. I met a similar question once and chose my honour and a life's unhappiness in place of a woman's favour. I would do so again. You must act as your feeling dictates."

"I follow your example, cousin Raoul, though with less at stake."

"*Le bon sang ne peut mentir.*" The old man's eyes shone as he grasped my hands. "I am an old Barbarian," he cried, "and you are a young one."

We turned our faces again towards the Château.

"That is a fitting home for us," he added.

It was, indeed, a gloomy—a savage-looking abode—a remnant of rude and lawless times. No other dwelling was visible. The grey walls were the centre of the cheerless, forest-encircled landscape.

Indoors the Château looked as grim as without. The furniture was of the scantiest and plainest. The floors, the walls and staircases were all alike of rough stone. The most cheerful thing in the house was the huge fire of pine logs which was always ablaze on the open hearth.

That night I felt the hall a dreary place, in spite of the fire, as I sat alone by it, pondering deeply long after the others had retired to rest. How could I ever have thought this a jolly old house, I wondered? And yet I had thought it that in my younger days, when I had helped to make the rafters ring with many a stirring hunting song and chorus.

It was arranged that I was to meet Monsieur Pierre Duclos on the morrow. And who could tell what the result would be? I did not know how he stood as a swordsman, but I knew my skill with that weapon was merely average. My meditations were none too cheerful, I may as well admit.

Presently I heard a slight sound, and looking up I saw a slim white form gliding down through the shadows of the great staircase.

Were there really such things as ghosts, I asked myself, and the next moment I recognised Céleste.

We had not exchanged words since morning, for she and her husband had kept their rooms during the day and had been served with their meals upstairs.

"He sleeps," she said, as she stood before me, "and I—I must speak with you."

"To what purpose?" I asked. "But perhaps you have come to beg for his life?"

"*His* life!" Her beautiful lips curved in scorn. She would have hidden her disloyalty, I fancy, could she have known the fierce dislike with which it inspired me. That was probably how she had spoken of me to him, I thought.

Ever since learning of her faithlessness my mind had dwelt upon the scene of our first meeting, when I should overwhelm her with my reproaches, or wither her with my scorn. Now that the moment had come, I felt only a stolid desire to oppose her, and a dislike to speak to her at all. It was a curious revulsion of feeling, I could not understand myself.

"I am come to beg for your forgiveness, Rod. I'll go on my knees for it if need be—but your forgiveness I must have or I shall die." Her voice was full of tragic passion, yet so sweet.

The beautiful eyes gazing into mine sent a shudder through me. I knew this pitiless woman would slay my soul, as she had slain my love, if she could.

A minute ago I had been looking death in the face. Perhaps that was why I now saw nothing but a corpse, where once there had been a beautiful girl I had worshipped for the white soul I believed was in her.

The revelation of Céleste's true nature had been too sudden, too complete for the wiles of the married siren to touch me, except to sorrow and anger.

"I forgive you," I said, for I wished her to go. She resented my readiness to forgive.

"Ah, but you have grown cold. Perhaps—no, it could not be fear that makes you cold. Still, you might be a dead man by to-morrow's noon!" She shuddered, or affected to.

Involuntarily my thoughts turned to my mother, and the loneliness that would be hers—and this girl ought in common gratitude to have been the stay and comfort of her old age. “If I die, whose is the work?” I asked coldly.

“Mine! mine!” she wailed. “But if you die, Rod, I shall die. Ah, do you not know, dear, what I have learned too late?”

“I know only one thing, Céleste—you are a married woman. Your husband and I will fight to-morrow, because of you, and one of us will take the life of the other. I have said I forgive you; but, by heaven, if you try me further, I shall retract those words.” I spoke it savagely, as I felt.

She stood in absolute silence for a few minutes, the dying firelight flickering upon her. She certainly looked haggard and miserable, and the gloomy surroundings gave an added fragility to her beauty. In the grim mediæval hall she looked like one of the distressed princesses who used to haunt my boyish dreams. Somehow her silence appealed to me as her speech had not. I felt the sorrow in it.

I suppose she saw the change in my mood, for her face suddenly brightened. She put out her hands to me. I made no movement. Then she dropped them listlessly.

“Good-bye, Rod. This is a strange burial-place.” She looked around her and shivered. I knew what she meant, and I did not undeceive her. There was another pause.

“Quite dead?” she whispered questioningly.

“Quite!” I answered, with a brusqueness that was not candour.

Her eyes flashed ominously as she turned away.

“My husband is the best swordsman in Paris. Take that for your comfort to-night,” she said.

Then she ascended the stairs again through the shadows, and I was alone by the dying fire.

I retired late, and towards morning I slept heavily. I was awakened from a dream of Céleste as a sweet and innocent girl by the touch of a hand on my shoulder.

Cousin Raoul stood beside me. With the sight of him my disillusionment and the dark work before me rushed to my mind. I sprang up in haste.

"I am not too late, I hope?"

"Too late by several hours."

"Good Heavens! Why was I not called?"

"Because your noble antagonist was so desirous your rest should not be disturbed, *mon ami*."

"What does it mean, cousin? This is surely no time for fooling."

"The honourable adversary thinks differently. He has played a pretty little trick—in short, he has vanished."

"Gone!"

"Yes, before daybreak, and madam with him, *Deo gratias*! That may throw some light on the affair."

And he tossed a little scented missive to me. I tore it open and read:

"I lied to you last night, Roderick, when I told you Pierre was the best swordsman in Paris; nevertheless, he is good—far better than you. I repented me—Ah, of how much have I repented me! Then I told him *you* were the best swordsman in the English Army, and I so played upon his fears, and his love for me, that I have persuaded him not to meet you. He could not bear the thought that to-morrow I might be a widow, and I—I could not bear the thought that I might be a murderess.

"Good-bye for ever,

"CELESTE."

When Raoul had read the note he returned it to me, with these words:

"So, after all, she sacrificed her husband's honour to her love for you. It is well she has exposed her true nature—she is a dangerous woman."

I had no answer. I only felt in my own mind I was satisfied with the vengeance Fate had taken upon both of them.

Shortly after this I wrote telling my mother of my whereabouts, but saying nothing of what had occurred.

It was terror of the very crisis which had already taken place unknown to her that brought my mother, a few days later, to the Château in the forest.

She wore a strained and startled look which made me feel guilty when she stood at the gate to meet us, all unexpectedly, on our return from the chase.

"My boy—my boy!" she cried, and burst into tears as I embraced her. "I had such fear for you. I could not rest night or day."

"You must indeed have feared for your son to venture here, madam," old Raoul said.

"Ah, yes—I never thought to look upon the dreadful place again," she murmured.

"We shall do our best to make it comfortable for you here. You may find it less terrible than in anticipation. See how cheerful are your son and I."

As the days passed and still my mother lingered with us, I thought I had never known Raoul so gay. He became quite a different man.

"She has got over her horror of me at last—at last," he said to me, and the joy in his voice was such as I have never heard in another.

"What is the story of your early acquaintance with Cousin Raoul?" I asked my mother one day, although I had guessed the better part of it by this time.

"Ah, I cannot speak of it even now because of the long, long sorrow. Only this, in the days of his hot youth he slew a man whom he thought had offered me an insult."

"And you loved him?"

"Yes, I loved a murderer. Do not blame me too much," she answered, shrinkingly.

"That is no word to apply to Raoul," I said, sternly. "He is a man of honour, if ever there was one."

"Perhaps you are right," she answered, meekly. "I have sometimes thought that I judged him harshly."

My mother was no longer a lonely woman when I rejoined my regiment a year later, and Cousin Raoul was a happy man.

E. H. BELL.

Who's Georgina?

I AM a very observant man. The circumstances of my life have been such that the part reserved for me in the Human Play has been always that of spectator and not of actor. I will confess that, in my extreme love of the drama, I have sometimes felt a pang of regret that it was so—that fate had never thrust upon me even the most insignificant *rôle*. It nearly happened once; but let that pass. It is the flower of my memory, and has been laid aside so long, it might well be covered with the mould of years.

Life has, however its compensations, and you're not going to deny a poor spectator all the poetry of life?

I use "poor," you will understand, in a figurative sense. For, as a matter of fact, my income has been easy, not to say ample, and I have, so to speak, occupied a cushioned stall from which I have viewed that absorbing spectacle, the Human Comedy. Undoubtedly one is better armed for the pleasures of observation in a seat from which it is necessary to turn upon the scene the limited aid of opera-glasses. They magnify the spot upon which you gaze, but, unhappily, the rest of the stage is left out of your vision. And my vision must have the sweep of the natural eye, or I make mistakes. I made one once—had the names in my play-bill jotted down wrong. I was fairly puzzled, but I don't know but what that "tragical-comical-historical" story did not interest me as much or more than some others where I have not been out of my reckoning.

In the year 186— I took a voyage to Australia. I am fond of the sea, and I had a brother in the colonies to

whom I proposed to pay a visit. I embarked, accordingly, one muggy November day at the docks. After the first half-hour of starting, when the noises and confusion on board ship suggest the vicinity of Bedlam (wherever that may be), I settled myself with a cigar and began to take a survey of my surroundings. We were steaming slowly past the low banks of the Thames, factories, foundries, sheddings, wharves, coal-barges, grime and greyness. Nothing here to attract the scenery lover. At least, in the undelusive daylight, though with a half-moon and a starry sky, I have seen the veil of night soften even Thames barges and factories into something very near beauty. If the disfiguring hand of man has marked this region for its own, one might say Melancholy had assisted, for the vision of dear England's noblest river is not "gay," as the French say at this juncture! I withdrew my gaze nearer at hand. What sort of passengers were to cheer the sea-sick hours? Uninteresting—direly so—if outward and visible signs were worth anything. I moralised in the phrase of a favourite author—"How different the people one meets are from the people one would like to meet!" There was, however, this consoling thought in reserve—the cabins below might hold the seething brain of artist, actor, politician, and possibly the pretty faces of two or three charming Angelinas, sitting with puckered brows unable "to find a thing." For myself I had found a very snug corner, near the warmth of the funnel, which the air was chill enough to make welcome. I had on a thick top-coat, the fur collar turned up round my ears and a travelling cap well over my eyes. With these accessories I experienced moderate comfort. I hate cold. Most of the passengers had betaken themselves to lunch below and comparative quiet reigned. My cigar was good, and in the comfort of my physical condition—before alluded to—I fell asleep and dreamt—a dream that had for its foremost figure that of the policeman I had seen that morning outside the crowded London terminus, saying, "move on" to the cabbies. He was strangely attired, for though (in my dream) he wore a helmet he also wore a dress suit, which made me very un-

easy, as I had an outward conviction it was mine and yet I seemed unable to mention the fact. Why are we so organised as to think foolishnesses when nature is knitting up for us the "ravelled sleeve of care?" Well, life's serious enough, in all conscience, when we are awake; so perhaps our mighty mother knows what she's about when she adjusts the balance and plays pranks with our unconsciousness. However, it has always seemed to me a distinct loss; one has no power in the choice of subjects!

My awakening senses were roused to attention by talkers somewhere behind me. Said a masculine voice, "You get yourself picked up in health, old fellow. We'll do that Cornish tour some day. I may take a cursory glance round some of those places on my way back and see if they are good enough. By the way, what became of Georgina——?" He stopped as in recollection of a name I did not catch. "That pretty girl" he went on, "you knew down at Tre-pen-pol-gennaway, or whatever its outlandish name was?"

The other gave an odd sort of laugh.

"What's become of her? What becomes of all pretty girls?"

"Married?"

"Yes, married—that is, with limitations."

"Good gracious, Seddon," laughed the other, "how you give your friends away! Do you mean she took a trial trip, beginning at the Register Office?"

"I mean nothing of the sort," said the other sharply.

"Oh, no offence! I've a 'Dictionary of Phrase and Fable,' I'll look it up—Married with limitations."

The speakers moved their places, and I turned with interest to survey their appearance. One was a well-set fellow, of medium height. He wore a short, fair beard, his face was thin, with traces of recent illness. His friend was slim, athletic, finely bronzed, and blessed with a pair of blue eyes as honest as daylight. A very much younger man than the other. As I watched him on shore at Plymouth, I was sorry for Mr. Seddon's loss—the young fellow was eminently likeable to a man of any age. Seddon was standing near me at his departure, leaning

over the side of the ship, to see the last of his friend. A little group of passengers were waiting near the gangway to come on board. Three who caught my eye as noticeable, were three ladies—a somewhat remarkable looking old lady and two young girls. I was idly wondering if the faces of these latter, enveloped in veils, would prove as pretty as their figures, when I was startled by an ejaculation at my elbow. It was Seddon. He was lividly white. "Are you ill?" I said, "I've no Cognac about me, I fear," tapping, as I spoke, my various pockets.

"Oh, no," he said, "many thanks." Then he fixed on me a look of anxious excuse. "I'm more or less invalided you know. I'm only lately out of an illness." With that he turned and left me.

The two young women whose good looks I had speculated upon, quite verified my suppositions. Without the veils and hats, their heads were as charming as you please (this remark is in prospective, as I did not see the elder till a few days later). I had yet to discover their relation to each other and to the old lady. They were evidently not sisters. It interested me to discover they were friends of the invalided man, addressed by his friend as "Seddon." I observed him conversing with the old lady and one of the young girls, about an hour after their advent on board. The "grandmother" appeared to know him well. Her companion, the young girl, sat by listening. She was the owner of a pair of steady shining eyes, a healthy clear complexion, a low broad brow, and curling hair. Her mouth was large, but her lips had a charming curve. A Scotch type it seemed to me. In my preamble up and down deck, I came within hearing once or twice. "Ina, my dear," it was the old lady who spoke, "fetch me a shawl, and tell Blanche to come up at once! Such nonsense!"

Miss Blanche, however, never appeared. It was the third morning after we left Plymouth before I saw her. She was sitting on deck with her friend. I noticed casually she was pale and fair-haired. Further and much later observation told me her strange look of still-

ness and reserve was forced, for there was latent fire in her clever eyes. This group of four instantly became my little *divertissement*, for the certainty dawned on me more and more that their relations to each other had a history in the background.

I frequently had talks with Seddon, smoking our cigars up and down deck at night, before turning in. He was a good talker, and I liked him much. He often had abstracted moody fits, which I attributed to his health. I then took the conversation in hand and recounted some of my long stories. I tell a tale very well. I don't think now he listened! He never mentioned the three ladies. As I knew him better, I tried to draw him out, but all he said was, they were old friends he had not seen for some long while, and would be passengers as far as Naples. He was going on to Cairo. Miss Stewart, he said, in answer to my inquiry, was the name of Miss Linscombe's Scotch friend. It seemed to me his manner to old Mrs. Linscombe's grand-daughter, the colourless Blanche, bore the effort of a constrained politeness. I observed, moreover, that when he joined their little group, she frequently stopped talking and became distant and *distracte*. "There's a mutual dislike there," I said to myself, though I could not understand anyone's assuming the unfriendly attitude towards Seddon. However, Miss Linscombe's friend made up for any lack of courtesy. She and Seddon were often to be met in *tête-à-tête* deck walks. Their talks appeared to savour of gravity, and bore in no way the faintest trace of flirtation.

One roughish day, Seddon and I were smoking by the ship's side. There was enough sea on to make walking difficult. The only lady on deck—Miss Stewart—was nevertheless performing the feat, keeping her balance with astonishing security, and delighting in the fun.

"That's a true daughter of the land of braes and burns," I said. "Splendid health, I should say—swam in the lochs and ran wild on the moors from her babyhood, I'll be bound. Her intonation is but little Scotch, and that is odd! What a betrayal of nationality in her name—Georgina Stewart! Cruel name to saddle a pretty

girl with—Georgina ! At least, I conclude such is her name. Small wonder her friends address her as 'Ina.' The affix is certainly more euphonious !”

Seddon laughed.

“ A woman's Christian name is, you know, but a detail !”

The incident I am now going to relate happened a day or two later, proving that I am still a novice in gauging a man rightly, proving how many and various are the ways and manners of a man towards the girl with whom he is in love.

It was a brilliant moonlight night, all the passengers had wandered away to the other end of the ship, and I flung myself down full length, on a seat in deep shadow, near the captain's cabin. I lay for some time, my back most impolitely turned to Her Loveliness the Moon, but it was sheltered and warm from the breeze. I was so completely hidden in the deep shadow that several couples passed with no idea that they were within a few inches of a lazy fellow-being. Presently Seddon advanced, in conversation with Miss Blanche Linscombe. She wore a black hood on her abundant fair hair. It was vastly becoming. She was fascinating, as she moved in the moonlight with her languid, graceful step.

They were discussing a lady on board generally considered to be a beauty.

“ So you think her beautiful ?” said Seddon. “ Yes, perhaps so, but it's beauty without charm.” He paused and added slowly, as though weighing his words :— “ The face of the woman I love, that is to me the one beautiful face. Shall I tell you her name ?”

“ No,” said the girl, in a choked voice.

“ Ah ! but I will. Her first name is Georgina—her surname is——”

He stopped, and then what happened was very curious. A colour rose in Miss Linscombe's face, and died it red as the rose.

“ It's late,” was all she said. “ Good-night.”

That someone for whom your tolerance is just polite, and barely that sometimes, should inform you of his feel-

ings towards a friend, seemed to me no cause for a blush. Nothing, however, will account for the unaccountableness of women! The cleverist of us sees them through a glass darkly, in a riddle.

Seddon continued to be a great deal in Miss Seddon's company, but I failed to discover any accession of lover-likeness in his manner. He *was* reserved—reserved with a vengeance.

About this time we had a spell of rough weather, and the ladies kept mostly below. As it became calmer a few ventured on deck, and amongst them Miss Linscombe.

During the half-hour Seddon was chatting to me she had been sitting not far off with a book. I noticed that she did not perceive us, in the angle at which we stood by the deck-house smoking-room. She rose and, closing her book prepared to make her way to the saloon. As she did so, a big wave lurched the ship.

"Take care!" cried Seddon, as he darted forward, reaching her as she swayed, and steadying her slight figure with his outstretched arm.

Yes, Miss Linscombe was bad-tempered—I had suspected it before! She turned upon him with the hot colour surging in her face and her eyes ablaze.

"Thank you! but you need not have come. I should not have fallen. Why do you *watch me*? I am free—absolutely and entirely free." In her passion she paused for breath. "I am not! I am not!" she burst out in wild contradiction.

"Hush!" Something in his voice seemed to control her, and he added quietly, "Let me tell you. Two months ago it was nearly all over with me, so the doctors said. It would have been the heroic thing, I know, to have quietly let the breath die out of me. It would have brought the great happiness on—on my——"

"You have been very ill?" said Miss Linscombe at last, gently, after a strange little silence between them that bore signs of embarrassment. "Who nursed you?"

"The usual hospital nurse."

He studied her face as her eyes looked out to sea.

"No," he continued, "I was determined to live, if only in the hope that I might one day see forgiveness in the eyes that have good cause to look on me with dislike—hatred, if you will."

Miss Linscombe did not remove her eyes from the sea, but a tinge of colour rose in her cheek as she said, slowly and softly:

"I don't hate you. I hate what you did!"

"Ah!" laughed Seddon, with a real note of joy in his voice, "that's too subtle for me! But that you are able to say to me with your own lips the first part of that sentence, God bless you for that."

Points about this conversation entirely eluded my comprehension. What had been Seddon's relations to Miss Linscombe? That he was now in love with Miss Stewart was certain, for had I not overheard him confess the same to his fair, hooded companion that night of the brilliant moonlight?

The next day we were due at Naples. Miss Stewart was close behind me among the little crowd of departing passengers as she completed her adieux to Seddon.

"I will write and tell you just how we are. Oh! I promise that. Blanche says I'm——"

"This way, Miss, please," said one of the ship's officials, pushing his way through with her small baggage.

And away she went, as refreshing a bit of nature as a bunch of heather or the atmosphere of a Scotch moor. My feelings took a bound of pity for Seddon. In the day or two following he was not in a mood for conversation and I saw little or nothing of him. One fine evening, at dusk, I stumbled across him at last, sitting in the part of deck his friends had usually occupied.

"Miss the ladies, don't we?" I said. Then, though I knew I should prove a fool for my pains, still sympathy, or curiosity, or whatever you like to call it, got the better of me, and with Ina Stewart's face and figure then very vividly before my vision—

"She is very pretty," I remarked.

Seddon laughed.

"Inadequate word! I don't think her 'pretty.' She's no more like your ordinary pretty girl than——"

While he was preparing a simile I broke in—

"Oh yes; of course not. I did not mean that," I said untruthfully to appease him. "So much character. 'Pretty' is not, of course, inclusive enough; such a fresh, fearless, honest little soul."

I was afraid I had made matters worse. He stared.

"I mean how different to her friend, Miss Linscombe. Odd girl that! If she's put out, I should imagine there's the——"

I got what I deserved!

"Have the goodness to remember those ladies are friends of mine," said Seddon, with enough temper in his tone to bring the blood into his face; and off I walked, as I mumbled "Pardon!" and prepared to choke down my discomfort with a pipe.

Before we parted we had entirely resumed the old friendly footing; and, if I did think him unnecessarily reserved, I believe I liked him none the worse for that.

I was away from England as long as I had proposed to myself, and a bleak March wind found me in my old quarters and very glad to be there again. Travelling is, without doubt, delightful and informing as a rule; but, nevertheless, the world of London holds the germs of all possibilities of knowledge and pleasure, and to live where the dense mass of life's nerve fibres throb at their roots, is to learn more of the complicated machinery of our organisation than by all the sight of the eyes in wanderings abroad. A sight which gave my eyes much pleasure was the unexpected vista of my board-ship friend, Seddon, as he presented his pleasant face in the picture-like frame of a hansom cab. It was in the Mall. He caught sight of me and, springing out, dismissed the man. It was uncommonly pleasant to meet again. He had told me at Aden his plans were so vague. He could give me no idea of his whereabouts on my return. We had a little chaffing talk. He seemed in excellent health and spirits. With his usual habit of smoking he pulled out a cigar-

case—a beautiful little article of costly metal-work. He caught my eye fixed on it.

“Ah! neat little case, isn't it? Georgina's present.” He surveyed me with a twinkling eye, as much as to say, “Now I've given him the lead.” So I took it.

“That's interesting! Georgina has good taste! Since you've told me so much, is it permitted to enquire further?”

“Perfectly. My wife!”

He looked at me to watch his little effect, but I flatter myself I did not gratify him!

“Ah! that's interesting, too! I did not know you were the proud possessor of such a commodity.”

“Neither did I till lately. I had possessed a real one unreally for some time.”

“Riddles, my friend! I'm not sure that I follow. Is that a new form of *fin-de-siècle* matrimony? If so, initiate me, for I am bound to say it appears successful!”

Seddon's bearing had, indeed, the mark of a reserved completion of satisfaction. I felt, or rather saw, that the gods had descended into his life.

“Come and dine with us,” he went on, “I should like to tell you all about it. My wife will be delighted to see you. You've met before.” And then he left me laughing, with his card in my hand, on which he had scribbled the dinner hour and the address of a square in a fashionable quarter.

So, I thought, after all he has married Georgina Stewart, *et voilà la fin!* I was not elated! I presented myself that evening at the number indicated on the card. It was a fine house, and as I rang the bell I thought to myself that Miss Ina Stewart's lines had fallen in pleasant places, and with the devoted Seddon for husband, it struck me she had more than the average share of the rose-leaves of life. The servant ushered me upstairs, announced my name at the drawing-room door, and departed. The inmates, who were at the far end of the long room, did not hear my approach, and for a moment I saw as in a picture—this— With his arm resting on the back of an easy chair, lounged Seddon, a cigarette between his fingers; in the chair was a lady with her

face upturned to his, laughing. The light from a shaded hanging lamp threw a soft glow over them both, over her vaporous black dress, over her round white arms, resting along the red-cushioned sides of the chair. She was very fair. The lady was—no, I should say, had been—Miss Blanche Linscombe.

Mrs. Seddon having left us over the wine and fruit, with a bewitching appeal to us at the door “not to be long” (she looked back with her head in profile like a fine cameo against the dark oak), Seddon began the story of his marriage.

“An eccentric old lady, living an out-of-the-world life down in Cornwall, had been known to me from childhood, inasmuch as she was an acquaintance and near neighbour of my father’s. Her sole companion was her granddaughter, Georgina Linscombe, who, left without parents at the age of seventeen, came to live with her grandmother. Georgina’s first name not being adopted, was the one I preferred. She tried in those days to laugh me out of it. She said it was too ugly, but it belonged to remembrances of her happiest moods. You will excuse me putting the facts abruptly—she refused me. Her grandmother was furious, for there were reasons that made it a supremely personal matter with old Mrs. Linscombe that Georgina should become my wife.

“I had inherited at my father’s death the property of Penellan Lodge, in Cornwall. The house was small, and incommensurate to a degree, but my father had led so quiet a life, during the many years of his widowhood, that its inhospitable accommodation was of no moment to him. He had, however, been a man of good fortune, and the keeping up of the estate—a large acreage—had been his hobby and delight, and the park and grounds attested to his care and interest on every hand. The adjoining place, Penellan Manor, was the residence of old Mrs. Linscombe, and the lands of the two estates dovetailed into each other in a curious manner.

“The Manor house had opposing characteristics ; that is to say, the house was fine, on a grandly picturesque site, the property poor. Mrs. Linscombe’s limited means

would allow of no outlay in keeping it up, and the dilapidated fences alone were a bye-word in the county. Georgina Linscombe was her grandmother's nearest living kith or kin, and, had she become my wife, the natural arrangement would have been that we should have lived in the Manor house—an enviable home, for it had besides much beauty of architecture—and have taken in under one estate my own place.

“The lady's wits had jumped with mine, for this plan had been my intention, had I become the husband of her grand-daughter. My income was fully equal to improvements and embellishments of the impoverished Manor estate, and like my father, I took pleasure in landed property. As for Mrs. Linscombe, she would have died in the satisfaction of restored fortune to the old place, for which she had an almost fierce tenacity of affection. I have told you all this, that you may the more fully realise the old lady's rage when Georgina refused to marry me. Georgina admitted she liked me with the liking of friendship, but that it was not love, and never would be. I knew well, if thwarted in any matter of importance, how terrible her grandmother could be. I knew well she would be clever at devising torments. In an interview I had with her, I tried to reason with her—said it was cruelty to force a young girl to marry against her heart, and could not, I said, things go on as before my proposal, and let me take my chance again in a year or two. She only scoffed at this temporising, and I came away with a nightmare presentiment in my soul that she had locked Georgina up and was feeding her on bread and water. This I know now to be true. The old woman's infirmities of temper had increased with advancing years, and were of the sort that border on insanity.

“On that dark night, as I groped my way home down the avenue, a thought struck me. I had nearly said a ‘happy’ one, but it was not that. You must extend to me what forgiveness you can, when you remember I was like the drowning man clinging to the proverbial straws. I was madly in love, and what is it Shakespeare says, ‘Madmen and lovers have seething brains?’

“Accordingly, the following day, I again saw Mrs. Linscombe and laid before her a proposition which I desired her to place before her grand-daughter. It was that we should be married at once at some distant church, and let it be entirely unknown to the world (Mrs. Linscombe’s was so small a one, there would be no difficulty in that), and that after the ceremony I should leave Georgina with her grandmother and never show myself again for a space of years to be determined on—say five or seven, except in the event of her grandmother’s death, when I should, of course, adduce evidence that Georgina was my lawful wife. Mrs. Linscombe was appeased. Georgina, poor girl, gave an inanimate consent. Her physical and mental endurance had reached their limits, and the clause in the arrangement—a space of years—seemed to her a lifetime, the end of which, in her unhinged condition, she did not think she would live to see. All that she realised was that for the present the tension with her grandmother would be eased. I suffered horribly from remorse afterwards, knowing I had tied her, and yet the pacification of her severe relative was a large element in her happier life. Now, you know all the rest—how we met on board. The doctor had ordered Mrs. Linscombe to winter at Sorrento. She had suffered from bronchitis, but in physical strength she was otherwise vigorous, or seemed so ; for, did you hear ? Or no, you may not ; she was taken very ill soon after their arrival in Naples, and in the alarm Georgina telegraphed me, ‘Come.’ It is unnecessary to tell you I went. It is unnecessary to add that force of circumstances during the period of the old lady’s illness and death, threw in my way numberless opportunities of being of service to my wife, and at last, after coquetting with me so long, that captious creature—Happiness—came to me at last. One day before we left Naples—a day, by the way, of torrents of rain—I—Hulloa ! my friend, you’re a very good listener, but you’re not going to have this part of my story to stuff with your next pipe !’ There was a pause before my narrator added. ‘After all, it’s simple enough, I suppose. She merely said, “I love you.” That is to say, to be literal,

she did not say it. She said no such thing. What lies her eyes told against her that day !

“ More wine ? No ? Shall we go up ? I hear her playing Chopin.”

JOHN CONISTON.

A Visit to Dalmatia and Montenegro.

THE Dalmatian Coast and the country of Montenegro, saturated as they are with the spirit of a great past, are full of surpassing interest, and are likely, in the near future, to be a favourite pleasure ground for the tourist. Nowhere else in the world is it possible, within such short distances, to see such a diversity of national manners and customs ; to hear so many different languages spoken ; to see so many picturesque dresses ; and, as Montenegro is approached, to behold such wild and magnificent scenery. There are also ruins of Roman and Illyrian towns which have been but seldom visited, and numerous examples of Christian Churches of the fifth and succeeding centuries, many of which are in an excellent state of preservation.

Twenty years ago a journey to the countries lying on the eastern side of the Adriatic (those wild and savage lairs of the Berlin Treaty) was seldom thought of. Many of the population were understood to recognise no other law than their own wills or the promptings of vengeance, and, although they were never quite so black as painted, there was certainly room for much improvement. Now, however, the mediæval characteristics of these countries are yielding before the influence of modern thought, and the old careless spirit is giving place to increased order. Steamboat companies are running boats from Trieste and Fiume ; good roads have been made into the interior, a few railroads have been laid down—and thus the elbow of the West is jogging steadily at the side of the Orient.

Another factor which makes these countries interesting is that nightmare of statesmen and diplomatists—"The Eastern Question." East of the Adriatic there is some of the most fertile land in Europe, populated with peoples

of the hottest human blood, who, ever since intrepid Hungary stopped the Westward march of the Crescent-bearing warriors, and showed that there was a limit even to the Mussulmans' success, have been gradually evolving this Eastern Question. Although Hungary turned the tide of Turkish invasion, Montenegro can claim the honour of being the only Balkan state which kept its liberty inviolate. Hundreds of battles have been waged on the sides of their black mountains, some of which were lost and others won, but always in the end the Montenegrin remained free.

"O smallest among peoples ! rough rock throne
Of freedom ! warriors beating back the swarm
Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years.
Great Tsernagoro ! never since thine own
Black ridges drew the cloud, and brake the storm,
Has breathed a race of mightier mountaineers."

Ever since those dark days when they lost their freedom, the various nations of the Balkans have each in turn made attempts to oust the Turkish rule. Hungary was the first to gain her independence; then Servia revolted, and later on Greece drove the Turks from amongst the more ancient of her monuments. In our own times, Bulgaria—with the help of the Czar—rolls back the tide still further, and Roumania establishes her independence. The Berlin Treaty allows the Austrians to subdue the Moslems of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to-day we have the Armenians, the Macedonians, and the people of the Island of Crete, as restless as can be and apparently only waiting for opportunity to strike yet another blow at the hated Turkish rule. "There'll be trouble in the Balkans in the spring," says the old war correspondent in that beautiful story, "The Light that Failed," and, in very truth, this exactly expresses the situation.

I journeyed from Elba *viâ* Leghorn, Florence, and Venice, and after a short stay at Trieste, a few hours' railway journey brought me to Fiume—a rising modern seaport with plenty of shipping (a good deal of it being English). It is the only seaport of Hungary and Croatia, and, having now its own line of steamers and better

facilities generally for shipping, it bids fair to outrival Trieste. Two lines of steamers run down the Dalmatian Coast—namely, the Austrian-Lloyd, and older line, which starts from Trieste; and the Hungary-Croatia line, running from Fiume. Whitehead's torpedo works are situated near the town, and the district is also a great centre for the refining of petroleum. The Slavonic element begins to make itself evident here, but little Italian and Austrian are spoken.

I took ticket on one of the Hungary-Croatia line of steamers, and soon after leaving the port had my first experience of the Boro wind, which is peculiar to this part of the Adriatic. It is more bracing than the Italian Scirocco, and fortunately, being a land wind, drives the shipping off the rocks; but, with Horace, I would say of it, "*Dux inquieti turbidus Hadriæ*," for most probably he had experienced the full meaning of these words. The steamer ran nearly broadside on, with the waves, and I was thrown out of my berth several times during the night. The two principal winds that blow in the Adriatic are the warm, relaxing Scirocco, which name is derived from the Arabic word *sherk*, meaning "East," and this dreaded Boro or N.E. wind—the word being a corruption of the Boreas of the ancients.

Along a considerable portion of the Dalmatian Coast, there are hundreds of small islands, and, whenever possible, the steamer threads its way between them in comparatively smooth water, and there is thus much to interest the tourist. The captains of these boats speak quite a number of languages—in fact, in order to do business in this part of Europe, one must be a fair linguist, as four distinct languages (not to mention several dialects of the Slav) are spoken within a strip of country not more than 250 miles long by 50 miles broad. Viewed from the steamer, the coast presents a line of forests and brushwood, over which tremendous rocks rear their heads, whilst here and there a village or fishing hamlet is to be seen, and occasionally the ruins of a castle or some town, the very name of which is forgotten.

The country of Dalmatia has been the theatre of many great events, it was here for example, that the Romans warred with the powerful Illyrian King Gentius, and here also the battle of Actium decided the dominion of the world between Augustus and Antony. The Romans subjected the country five times to their yoke, and as many times it threw off their subjection. At the time of the Crusades it was still populous, but now many of its oldest towns are in ruins, whilst in some cases the ruins have become covered with the dust of centuries, and the sites lost. Dalmatia originally formed part of ancient Sclavonia, which is said to have extended from the Adriatic to the Euxine Sea ; it took its name from the Sclavia Leythian nation, which successfully invaded the northern portion of the Eastern Empire in the reign of the Emperor Justinian.

In the time of their prosperity the Venetians made a conquest of the country and compelled the natives to submit to the vilest drudgery, so that etymologists tell us our English word "slave" derives its meaning from the people who were thus oppressed and abused by their conquerors. The Hungarians afterwards made themselves masters of a greater part of the country, and were in occupation when Solyman the Magnificent invaded and reduced it in the year 1540. The Turks remained in possession until the year 1687 ; soon after which they lost this and other territories north of the Save and Danube. now possessed by the Austrians.

The steamer arrived at about 7.0 a.m. at Zara, and everybody was very glad to get ashore after the tossing they had had. Zara is the capital town of Dalmatia and stands on a peninsula or island, divided from the land by a deep ditch into which the sea flows. The cathedral is dedicated to St. Simeon, who took the infant Jesus in his arms, and the inhabitants have a tradition which they believe implicitly, that the Saint's body lies buried in their church, The buildings on the quay are painfully new for a town standing on the site of a once important Roman station ; but in the town itself there are many narrow streets and in-

teresting buildings, recalling the occupation of the Doges of Venice, who established a protectorate here, and added to their other titles that of Dukes of Dalmatia. One of the most interesting specimens of architecture is the Porta de Terra Ferma, which was designed by the great Venetian architect Saminicheli, and near to this gate the main supply of water is drawn by hand from five wells or cisterns, each being furnished with the usual marble well-curb and cover of wood.

One should not leave Zara without tasting the wines of the district, for Dalmatia produces many kinds of wine, although the majority of them are sweet. The country between Zara and Spalato, of which I shall speak later, is, however, specially noted for two varieties, namely, the famous Maraschino, and a white wine, *Vino Tartaro*. The Maraschino is the favourite drink of the district, and is made from the small fruit of the wild cherry; these cherries are grown very largely. A considerable quantity of Maraschino wine is also exported. It is the stone of the fruit which gives this liquor its peculiar flavour.

In coasting from Zara to Spalato, and about four and a-half hours run from the former place, is the ancient promontory of La Planca, where, as it juts far out into the open sea, one is more likely than not to meet with bad weather. When a heavy sea is met with, the steamer has usually to put back into a place of refuge in one of the many harbours and creeks to the north of this point. If the tourist prefers, however, he may leave the steamer at Sebenico and go across to Spalato overland by train, or break his journey half way and visit Knin.

The harbour of Sebenico is approached by a very narrow channel, the mouth of which is guarded by the fort of St. Nicolo, built by the Venetians. The town first came prominently into notice in the eleventh century, when it formed part of the dominions of Hungary, and possessed a royal palace where one of the Magyar kings resided. In the beginning of the twelfth century the town was taken by the Venetians, and became a place of great importance during the constant

warfare carried on between the Christians and Turks. In 1797, however, at the fall of the Venetian Republic, it passed into the hands of Austria, who has held it ever since, except for a short period in the early part of this century, when it belonged to France. The cathedral was begun in the early part of the fifteenth century, but was not completed for more than one hundred years. The interior is very fine, being built entirely of white marble and limestone.

Spalato, which I next visited, is famous as being the place where the Emperor Diocletian died. Students of Roman history will remember how he rose from a common soldier to be Emperor of Rome, and how, after ruling the then known world for a period of about twenty years, he laid down his sceptre and went to live in his beautiful palace at Spalato, where he died. Parts of the palace (which originally covered nine acres), still remain, but it has been much cut up, and is now a maze of narrow streets, shops, and houses. One is shocked to see windows cut through the walls, and the spaces between the columns filled in with all kinds of shops. It is some satisfaction to know, however, that the Austrian Government have decided to prevent any further vandalism in this way, and it is to be hoped that they will now extend their efforts and protect all the remaining ancient monuments of this most romantic country. What was once the Emperor's private chapel is now used as the cathedral, and as it is octagonal in shape, it is unique, and well worth a visit.

Just before I arrived at Spalato there had been several riots in the neighbourhood, and great excitement prevailed in the town. From inquiries made of the officials, I found the matter came about in the following manner, which, by the way, gives an insight into the character of the people. Until a few months previously only one language—Italian—had been spoken in the law courts and schools, and, as this arrangement was obviously unfair to the mountain people, who only speak Sclavonic dialects, the Austrian Government had ordered that in future the Sclavonic should be put upon the same footing

as the Italian language. Now, as a very large number of the people along the coast are Italians pure and simple, or are descendants of the old Venetian merchants, they, of course, only speak Italian, and the uproar had been caused by the lower Italian speaking orders coming into contact with the mountain people. Although the riots were quickly quelled, there will be a good deal of feeling in the district for some time to come.

Game appears to be plentiful in the hills, especially woodcock and partridge. The peasants who bring them to the coast towns are dressed in the national costume, generally consisting, in the case of the men, of the double-bag or united Turkish trousers, scarlet turbans, gold earrings, embroidered jackets, and a leather belt through which is stuck a pistol and knife. One item of the dress is something like a piece of stair carpet, fringed at both ends, and worn carelessly over the shoulders in wet weather.

The women of Dalmatia, especially the elder ones, I am sorry to say, are the hardest workers. When the steamer arrives at one of the little towns, more often than not it is the women who bring on the wood and coal for the boilers, or see to the removal of luggage, whilst the men employ themselves in the more agreeable occupation of smoking and lounging.

After a very rough passage of several hours, we arrived at Gravosa. This town is not very interesting, but an hour's drive brings one to the beautiful old town of Ragusa, on the other side of the promontory. Ragusa is a perfect little mediæval city, which is not yet spoilt by Western customs. It was visited by an earthquake in 1667, which destroyed many of the smaller buildings, and is also stated to have killed 5000 of the inhabitants. So large a proportion of this number belonged to the hereditary nobles, that in order to preserve the balance of power in the State, the desperate expedient was adopted of raising some scores of the citizens to the rank of noblemen. The Ragusians never quite lost their independence to the Turks, and until the city with its territory was presented by Buonaparte to

General Marmont, as a reward for his services, it was a small independent republic under the "protection" of the Sultan.

The style of the buildings, and the bearing of the people, points still to an active civic life not so long extinguished. There are many fine walls and gates, and also two very beautiful buildings, which have survived the earthquake, namely, the Customs House and the palace of the Chief Magistrate. Our own Richard Cœur de Lion, it will be remembered, was shipwrecked off this coast, and the present seventeenth century cathedral at Ragusa replaces a native church built by that monarch.

Just off Ragusa, in the middle of the bay, is the island of Lacroma, famous as being the residence of the unfortunate Archduke Maximilian, and afterwards of the Archduke Rudolf.

About five hours after leaving Ragusa, our linguistic Captain pointed out the towering rocks of the romantic mountain land I had come to visit, and soon afterwards we began to make our way through the narrow winding Bocche di Cattaro, or Mouth of Cattaro, passing through scenery which was startling in its grandeur. Time after time we seemed to be heading direct on to the rocks, which seemed in some places to be distant only about a stone's throw on either side. On entering, the hills are vine-clad and slope right down to the water's edge, but as the town of Cattaro is approached, the cliffs become more steep and less covered with vegetation, until the inclination of the rocky wall is at last almost perpendicular.

The Bocche, often called the Bosphorus of the Slav, has such natural beauty, and is so peaceful and picturesque, that it is hard to imagine why more travellers do not find their way thither. Villages nestle along its shores, and there is also a pretty little island church and fortress well worth visiting. Midway in its length the Bocche contracts at a place called Catine, where in the olden times chains used to be drawn across from cliff to cliff, to protect the inner harbour in time of war. The Austrians have now built a fort at this point which would sink in a few

minutes any vessel trying to force a passage. A number of troops are quartered at Cattaro, and the Austrian officers form a distinct class to themselves. The town seems almost under martial law, being walled all round, with sentries posted at frequent intervals, and severe German discipline enforced. The gates are closed at a certain time in the evening, and every stranger must expect to be under supervision, more or less. The streets are narrow, as in all the Dalmatian towns, but the sanitary arrangements are very fair, and there are some comfortable hotels.

The market, which is held on the quay in the early morning, is very interesting. Boats shaped something like an English canal barge come from the villages along the Bocche and heavily laden men, women and donkeys from Montenegro. The old women are very badly treated in this respect, as they do a large proportion of the laborious work of carrying goods to and from Montenegro.

The Bocchese know an Inglieski when they see him, although they have so few visitors; and when he requires to purchase anything prices go up cent. per cent.

The soldiers are for the most part from the North, and speaking another language, they mix very little with the townspeople. Outwardly the natives appear to be friendly disposed, but, as a matter of fact, there is no love lost between the Bocchese and the Austrians, and the former are only quiet because they are powerless. It appears that when the Bocchese threw in their lot with the Austrians, they objected to any application of the conscription. Austria promised not to apply it, but, breaking faith, caused a rising which had to be put down by force and disarmament. The Bocchese conscripts are sent to the most Northern part of Austria, and licenses to carry arms for sporting purposes are only given out very sparingly. There is plenty of game in consequence, especially woodcock and partridge.

The quay is used as a public promenade in the evening, and on Sunday the band of one of the regiments gives a concert, the effect of the music being heightened by the

precipitous mountains which rise on all sides. Twilight is very short, but when the moon rises the scene is most charming.

One feature which cannot fail to impress the visitor is the wonderful ladder or zig-zag road leading up the mountain side into Montenegro. It is a narrow ledge of rock, about five feet wide, strewn with boulders and without any railing, having an incline averaging over twenty degrees, according to the length of each "tack" (to use the nautical expression) of the zig-zag. Until recently, when the carriage road was made, this ladder of Cattaro was the only means of entering Montenegro, and the difficulties to be overcome may be judged from the fact that even pack horses have great difficulty in ascending it. Most of the necessities of life, therefore, together with the more ponderous articles of merchandise, have for hundred of years had to be carried upon the shoulders of the sturdy mountaineers, a clear rise from the sea of over 3000 feet. They go up and down with a peculiar swinging walk, and wearing rough raw hide shoes, seldom slip. A stranger going their pace would stand a very good chance of breaking his neck.

Twelve hundred feet above the town of Cattaro is the small fortress of St. Giovanni, built originally by the Turks in the fifteenth century. It suffered the vicissitudes of Fortune usual to fortresses on the Dalmatian coast, and belonged in turn to the Venetians, Austrians and Russians, being finally taken from the French by the English, under Hoste, in 1813, during the Napoleonic wars. The view from the top of this road, 3000 feet above sea-level, is one of the most remarkable in the world. On one side is the Bocche, with Cattaro and the little villages nestling amongst the cliffs, and the Adriatic in the distance, the whole forming a glorious panorama. On the other side are the heaped-up limestone rocks of Montenegro, like a monster stone-mason's yard.

Owing to the road difficulty and the absence of hotels, the country has thus far been practically inaccessible, and the ordinary British tourist but seldom seen there.

Now, however, a carriage road with steamer connection on the Lake of Scutari, has been made right across the country and travelling is much easier. This road extends from Cattaro (the last Austrian town) to Cetinje, the capital of Montenegro (an eight hours' drive). From Cetinje it goes to Rieka, and from thence a steamer runs twice a week across the Northern side of the Lake of Scutari to a place called Verpazar. Here another road, lately constructed, connects Verpazar with Antivari on the sea coast. This latter town is one of the two seaports given to Montenegro ; the other (granted at the Berlin Conference), being Dulcigno.

One of the chief objects of this people has been the possession of a port on the Adriatic, and it was on the realisation of their desire that the Prince wrote a short lyric, of which the following is a very inadequate rendering :

I hail thee, wide blue valley of Adria, that was wished for so long,
 I hail thee, and seeing thee, I begin to have a more intense hate
 For those mine enemies, in that they dared to so long separate
 My hills and thy waters—two natures so fair and two freedoms so strong
 As we are one to the other. Fast bound by the shedding of blood are we
 two,
 But we silence our curses and wait till our God shall judge,
 For to Him be the glory that now I can sing this song to you,
 O Falcons of Tserna-Gora, to whom the murmur of waves sounds so
 dear.

Be mine, and by this song I conjure you, Oh ! waters, remain mine if you
 prize
 The hand of that God on your depths, on your gems, on your creatures'
 increase;
 Be mine in your height and your width, in your winds and your storm and
 your peace;
 Be mine with the hue that is wooed of the sky, with your ships and your
 oars;
 And remain ours, Oh ! blue waters, for ever washing with the foam of your
 surging our shores,
 Till the sun shall dry up your abyss, till the world and its peoples shall
 cease.

Unfortunately for Montenegro neither of these places is at present of much service as a seaport, as they are too exposed to the Adriatic, and in the event of a war a few Austrian gunboats would probably close them up most effectually.

The Montenegrins have a joke to the effect that when the Creator was in the act of placing stones upon the earth the bag that held them burst, and they all fell on this part of the world. It certainly gives a fair description of the geographical features of the country. Dozens of times have invading armies been held in check by these limestone rocks, and up to a few years ago a military occupation of the country would have been extremely difficult, on account of the absence of roads and means of subsistence. Now, however, that the above-mentioned roads have been made, it is an open question whether they may not prove disastrous, should the Montenegrins be again involved in war; in fact, every improvement made in opening up their country tends to insecurity. At present the greatest difficulty in travelling in the country lies in finding suitable resting-places where one may get a decent meal and clean bed. So far, in all Montenegro there is practically only one hotel (that at Cetinje), and anyone making a stay in the country, and going away from the capital, must therefore trust to the hospitality of the inhabitants. Before going forward to Montenegro, I stayed at Cattaro several days, and visited Teoda Caminara, and several other of the small villages in the Bocche. At the first-named place there is a naval school, and also part of the Austrian squadron is stationed there. On one of these excursions my attention was called by the guide to three Montenegrin tobacco smugglers being chased along the mountain side by Austrian soldiers. After watching the chase for some time, we noticed one of the smugglers disappear into a cave, and come out immediately afterwards without his load, and then run after his friends, who had dropped their packs as they ran. The men were agile as cats, and it was a wonderful sight to see the way they jumped from rock to rock; they soon outpaced the Austrians, and both pursued and pursuers shortly afterwards disappeared round a bend in the mountain. The men who had been watching now thought they might as well appropriate the pack of tobacco which had been left in the cave, and this they were just about to do when the Austrians turned up again, and it

now became our turn to run. Fortunately, they decided that an Ingleski could not be mixed up with smugglers, and I was allowed to depart, but my two guides, who had disappeared almost as quickly as the real smugglers, did not report themselves again until several hours afterwards.

At the end of the Bay of Cattaro, a valley opens out between the mountains, through which a fairly good road leads to Budua, twelve miles distant. This town, called Butua by Pliny, was one of the most important Roman cities of Dalmatia. It is now almost deserted, but the fortifications and castle which remain, point it out as having been an important place in the time of the Venetians. In the ninth century it was almost destroyed by the Saracens; and Turkish armies have also visited it twice—the first time in 1571, when they nearly razed it to the ground; and again in 1687, on which occasion it was gallantly defended by the Venetian General Cornaro.

At Budua I was met by a Montenegrin gentleman, Sig. Stankovich, to whom I had introductions, and he accompanied me to Castel-lastua, and then across the mountains to his house near the Lake of Scutari. The Stankovitch family were exceedingly hospitable, and I was sorry I could not stay there longer than one day and a night. On entering a friend's house, it is the custom of the country for the traveller to hang his arms upon the wall, and he has also to submit to the ordeal of having his feet washed. My arms being limited to a pocket-knife, I was not troubled about the first regulation; but the second I had to submit to, not, however, without many protestations on my part.

In coming over the mountains, which took us the better part of two days, we had a most awful journey. It rained most of the way, making the rough bridle-path we were travelling along very slippery. The track was also, in some places, so encumbered with boulders and rocks, that the mules had the greatest difficulty in keeping their feet. Occasionally their hind legs would slip under and land us on *terra firma*; and I am sorry

to say that on one of these occasions some interesting negatives were broken. We were continually having to tie on our goods and chattels. With all this, however, it is astonishing to see how well the little mountain mules pick their way along. They are shod with plates having a small central hole, the plate completely covering the hoof and frog, and it is attached to the hoof by arrow-headed nails, bent over in such a way as to give a grip with their angular edges.

After an exceedingly rough journey we arrived at Verpazar, thoroughly fagged out, and very hungry. Unfortunately the Prince and his suite had passed through the village or town, as they call it, the day before, on his way from Antivari, where he had landed after a visit to Russia, so that it was only after considerable delay that Sig. Stankovich managed to collect some eggs, sausages, and black bread, and a freshly-made cheese, which I need hardly say we demolished ravenously. The next day I was received with every token of hospitality at the house of Sig. Plaminitz, brother-in-law and Aide-de-Camp to Prince Nicholas, his house being on the Antivari road, about three miles from Verpazar. This gentleman has strong Russian leanings, and keeps up many of their customs. The tea was made in a samovar, and drunk out of glasses, with a slice of lemon to take the place of milk and sugar. His brother, Sig. Michael Plaminitz, spoke English fluently, being one of the very few Montenegrins who can do so. The house is connected with the Prince's residence at Cetinje by telegraph; but so far as I could learn, the telephone has not yet been introduced into the country. From these gentlemen I learnt many interesting particulars about the country and customs of the people.

The name Montenegro, or Tzernagora, meaning "black mountain," is a rather peculiar title, inasmuch as the mountains are of limestone formation, and are therefore anything but black. Some etymologists explain this apparent misnomer by saying that several hundred years ago the now barren mountains were covered from base to summit with immense forests of oak and pine, and

that the constant warfare having cleared away almost every vestige of cover, the soil had no longer any network of roots and undergrowth to bind it to the rocks and has been gradually washed away. The people of the country think it got its name from the deep purple shade which the rocks assume during the after-glow at sunset, and it appears to me that this is the most likely explanation. Although the country has been extended twice in recent years, in 1878 and again in 1880, it is even now only about two-thirds the size of Wales. The population is about 300,000, distributed over some 500 villages and towns. The old part of the country is arid and rocky, but the recently annexed portions consist of forests and arable land, and it also takes in the Northern half of the Lake of Scutari, which is a valuable possession on account of the excellent fishing. I cannot, from experience, recommend the boats used on this lake. They are of the flat-bottomed, gondola build, and can only be used with safety when the water is quite calm. I shall not soon forget being out in one of these.

Most of the villages lie on the slopes of the mountains, but the houses are often so scattered that they appear rather to be separate hamlets than the component parts of a village. There are no streets—properly so called—nor fortifications of any kind, the mountains having, so far, formed a quite sufficient barrier. The houses have good walls of stone, but only the better class houses at Cetinje and Rieka are two storeys high and have tiled roofs, the peasants' houses being generally roofed with thatch or wooden shingles. The fireplace is simply a raised hearth on the floor with a cauldron suspended from a ring fixed in the wall, and the smoke escapes as best it can through a hole in the roof, chimneys being only met with in the better class houses.

The bread is baked without leaven, in the ashes, in exactly the same way as it was baked by the ancients. Each household has its old-fashioned hand-loom, with which it supplies itself with coarse cloth and home-bleached linen, whilst nearly every peasant keeps several of the long-limbed, curly coated little black pigs peculiar to

this part of Europe, also fowls and possibly a cow or two. Every inch of land capable of cultivation is worked to its utmost capacity, the men tilling the ground with a very primitive form of plough. Most of the work is done by the women, but as the wants of the household are very few, their method of living being so simple, only a small amount of work is necessary. Each family forms an independent unit, owning the same land generation after generation, and it is very seldom one person gives his services to another for payment.

Not the least interesting feature of a visit to such old-world countries as these is the pleasure of observing the archaic, yet graceful, methods of farming and domestic life, so far removed from what we see in our country now, and yet so like the life our own ancestors must have lived some hundreds of years ago. In the interior of the country, of course, there are fertile plains and valleys, where are found fair-sized farms, but on the borderland nearest the Adriatic the stones are so plentiful, and the little oases so few, that one wonders how the few inhabitants one meets, manage to live at all. Yet they do live, and perfect giants some of them are in physique. This scarcity of soil necessitates their taking every advantage of what little there is, and thus one sees fields of corn not much larger than an ordinary English kitchen, and which, in the distance, look like tablecloths or handkerchiefs laid in the sun to bleach.

Only a few of the natives are engaged in handicrafts, their disposition being to let strangers come into the country and do this work for them. The Prince has tried hard to alter this state of things, and in this way has been likened to the great Peter, Czar of Russia, as he has much the same aspirations and the same difficulties to contend with. During the last ten years especially, he has shown himself very anxious to civilise his mountain tribes as much as possible, and by steady persistence much progress has been made. In Montenegro there is a larger proportion of men who apparently live without any visible means of subsistence than any other country in Europe. Their one idea is

fighting, and many of them think manual labour beneath them. It was only after a considerable amount of trouble that smithies were erected at Cetinje, and the people persuaded to come and take lessons from the skilled workmen the Prince had specially brought into the country to teach them. At first a good many refused to learn; the Prince, however, nothing daunted, went himself to the forge, and, putting on workmen's clothes, spent some time learning the trade. After this his people thought they might as well follow his example, with the result that smithies are now established all over the Principality. Shoemakers, farriers, and other trades were equally difficult to establish, but the Prince's undaunted will and his extreme popularity have, or are gradually, weaning the people from the old idea that *to live is to fight*.

Fishing is very profitable, particularly in the Lake of Scutari, which is stocked with splendid fish, some species being peculiar to the district, and there is a fairly extensive export trade.

Like the Russians, the people are, at any rate outwardly, very religious, and whenever they pass a church or shrine by the roadside they cross themselves many times, and in the way peculiar to the Greek Church. In speaking they are continually using the words, *Bogami Bogati* ("My God, Thy God"), which, until one gets used to it, sounds very blasphemous at times. At a meal, for example, they will say, "My God, but what fine cheese!" When I ventured to suggest to some of the people that their portraits should be taken, they were pleased with the novelty of the idea, it being in most cases the first time they had witnessed such a proceeding; but I had great difficulty to get the women, especially the elder ones, to face the camera. Although the Montenegrin women are not shut up like their Turkish sisters, yet the idea of isolation seems to have filtered into the country, and when a stranger first enters a house the women generally hide themselves for a time.

The people seem to have a difficulty in understanding why Englishmen should visit their country, and it is in vain to say that curiosity alone has prompted your visit. They

generally make up their minds that the country must have great mineral possibilities, in the way of gold or precious stones, to bring a foreigner so far and over such a stony waste. As a matter of fact, the present Prince had a thorough geological survey made some years ago, when it was found that there was practically no mineral wealth whatever, the whole country being one mass of limestone. I did find some fairly rich manganese ore in several places; but it was in such small quantities as not to be worth working.

About the most valuable thing they have for export to England is the Scottano, or Shumach tree, grown in the Cevo district. This wood gives a yellow dye, and the leaves are used for tanning leather. Nearly all the wood which is at present being exported goes direct to France, and from there, no doubt, some of it finds its way to England; but there is no reason why large quantities should not be brought to England direct.

It would be difficult to find any country where the patriotic sentiment is so carefully handed down from generation to generation, or where the inhabitants have such indomitable energy and courage. One often hears a wandering minstrel singing of some famous warrior, and accompanying himself on the national one-stringed instrument, the Gusla. These wandering minstrels are, as a rule, old soldiers, to whom, in reward for their services, the Prince has granted a special licence to ask for alms. They are, at any rate, the only people who do so, and one cannot help contrasting this country with Italy, where the beggar is such a universal and irritating feature. From this word "Gusla" we get the name Guitar, the Gusla being, however, played with a bow, and the time varied by the intonation of the voice. Although the music is not quite according to English taste, the enthusiasm of the performer makes up for the monotony of the notes, for when singing his eyes are very animated, and he enunciates his words in a loud voice and with wonderful distinctness.

This clear pronunciation, when speaking, is common to all the Montenegrins, and is said to be due to their

habit of communicating to each other from mountain to mountain.

Although for five hundred years they have had no regular army, war has formed the essence of their history, and all through these centuries the continued national struggle for existence has bred in them an ardent desire for their own independence, which nothing will kill. The Prince has a permanent body-guard, which by the help of the Czar has recently been increased to a small standing army of about 3000 strong; yet the army of Montenegro really consists of practically every able-bodied man in the country. Any day the war bugles blown from the hill-tops will, within a few hours, bring every man rifle in hand, ready to follow the Prince, who, besides being his own Chancellor and Prime Minister, is also Commander-in-Chief. Although weapons are universally carried, yet the country is kept in perfect order—a fact which speaks volumes for the control these mountaineers exercise over their spirited tempers. Outwardly ferocious-looking, they are a chivalrous and courtly race, amongst whom tourists will find themselves as safe as in Italy.

Excepting the body-guard, who, as could be seen in the Jubilee procession have a very handsome uniform, the only uniform of the general army is the national dress with the "struka," a kind of brown shawl two feet wide by eight feet long, wrapped round their shoulders in wet weather, and like a bandolier in fine weather. They have no tents or camp equipment, the soldiers sleeping out in the open in their strukas, whatever the weather may be. The women also bear their part in the campaigns by carrying provisions and looking after the wounded, and in this way the army is almost entirely self-supporting in time of peace, and the cheapest army in Europe when in the field; ammunition being the costliest Government material.

The military age runs from seventeen to fifty; but when war breaks out every schoolboy and aged veteran is ready for the fray. It is stated that when the present Prince tried to prevent an old man of eighty from joining

his forces during the last war, the insulted warrior drew his pistol and shot himself.

Accustomed as they are to spend their leisure time shooting game or at target practise, they become exceedingly good marksmen and handle their rifles with much greater rapidity and facility than the average soldiers. They fire in the prostrate position, and, what is probably most important, are very good judges of distance. Like several other warlike people of the East, they consider it a special grace of God to die on the field of battle. Since the extension of territory, in 1878 and 1880, the new subjects of the Prince are also liable to serve, whatever their daily occupation, with one exception; the Musselman inhabitants of the port of Dulcigno being exempted on payment of a capitation tax.

The movement for the establishment of the standing army emanated from Russia, and the Czar has erected barracks for a battalion of soldiers at Cetinje, and presented the rifles and other war materials, which abundantly shows the use that will be made of these mountaineers if ever the ambition of Russia requires their co-operation.

The national dress is very becoming and is almost universally worn. Three items of the dress are, with a few exceptions, worn by both sexes. These are the "ginj," or short jacket; the "kappa," or cap; and the "opanke," or shoes. The jacket is very much cut away in front, and is made of fine woollen cloth of various colours, and heavily embroidered. As worn by the women, it is fitted with sleeves having embroidered cuffs, but with the men it is sleeveless. The cap is like a soldier's forage cap, with black silk edge and crimson cloth crown; the crown of the woman's cap being, as a rule, embroidered with gold thread in some ordinary geometrical pattern. The embroidery of the men's cap, however, always takes the form of a small semi-circle, in which is worked the Prince's initials, or the coat-of-arms of the country. The story connected with these caps is worth repeating. In that dark day for freedom, when the Moslem victory at Kossova put the Christians of Eastern Europe into mourning, the Servian race placed a black silk mourning-

band round the edge of the ordinary red fez which they were accustomed to wear. The Montenegrins, however, added the half of a small golden disc to the edge of the uncovered portion of the cloth crown, to mark their own bright spot of freedom on the blood-red field.

The shoes, or "opanke," are made of sun-dried ox-skin, with the toes pointed and turned up like the prow of a canoe. Top boots are now being worn, especially by the men in dirty weather, but the "opanke" will long continue to be the national foot gear. With these shoes on they are able to run over rugged and slippery rocks with the greatest agility, and the comfort to the foot, when accustomed to them, is said to be very great. I found, to my cost, that when off the main roads, the ordinary leather soled boots were most unsatisfactory.

When out visiting, on important occasions, a Montenegrin lady wears a loose, sleeveless, white embroidered coat, reaching nearly to the knees. The Montenegrin gentleman's costume consists of a long, white overcoat with sleeves, open in front, a gold-embroidered scarlet jacket, full blue knickerbockers, and patent leather top boots, whilst, like everybody else, he has the usual equipment of murderous weapons. There is the long barrelled six-chambered revolver, capable of bringing down a man at five hundred yards when used over the left arm by way of a rest, and by its side, and stuck crosswise through the silken waist sash, is the serpentine knife, called the "yataghan." Both knives and pistols are beautifully wrought and chased with antique patterns, the knife, in some cases, being several hundred years old. Altogether, the costumes are most picturesque, and, with their free and independent bearing, the Montenegrins would make splendid subjects for pictures.

The legislative is vested in a Senate composed of sixteen members, elected annually by all men who have borne arms. This Senate, with the Prince, acts as the Court of Justice in all important cases, but many of the minor offences are settled off hand by the Prince himself, who at certain times strolls over from the palace to a stone seat under the historic plane-tree in the principal

square. When seated here he is accessible to everyone of his subjects, rich and poor alike, without any formalities or introduction ; and here he tries, in a patriarchal way, such cases as are brought before him. In this matter of public audience he is more like a father to his people ; but in the case of foreigners, a certain amount of etiquette is observed. The Prince controls every department of the Government, and personally sees to such details as the making of new roads, buildings, etc. During the last half-century the standard of civilisation has been much improved, and education has made rapid strides, so that it must not be supposed that the people he rules in this patriarchal way are incapable of thinking for themselves. As a matter of fact, some exceedingly clever men have first seen the light in this part of Europe, not the least of who are the electrical engineers, Nikolo Tesla and Dobrowolsky.

The State income is about £60,000 per annum, a portion of which is a subsidy from Russia. They have stamps of their own, but the money in circulation is Austrian paper and Turkish silver. The same Slavonic origin and religious doctrines, as well as connections by marriage, and the above-mentioned subsidy, combine in inducing the Montenegrins to prefer the friendship of Russia to that of any other country nearer home. They proclaimed themselves under the protection of Russia in 1796, after having waged a successful war against Turkey, and the contribution of money has been paid annually ever since. The children of the principal families are educated in St. Petersburg, but some of them go to Vienna, Paris, or Florence to complete their education. Occupying, as the Montenegrins do, a natural citadel, which has long attracted the attention of the chief Powers, who can blame the Russian diplomatists for using every endeavour to keep up the friendly relationship between the two countries ? The inhabitants of the little Principality think very highly of the late Czar, and they will never forget how, when representatives of all the royal families were assembled at a banquet at St. Petersburg, he took occasion to rise and propose as the toast of the evening,

"The health of my friend, Prince Nicholas of Montenegro."

The Montenegrin language is considered to be the nearest dialect to the ancient Sclavonic tongue, into which the Scriptures were translated in the ninth century by St. Cyril and Methodius, and which continues to be the sacred tongue of all the Slav nations who accept the Greek confession of faith. An educated Russian, for instance, would have difficulty in reading either the Bible or the Mass, unless he has specially studied the ecclesiastical or old Sclavonic language in which it is written.

It is an interesting fact that Montenegro was one of the first countries to set up a printing-press, as Mr. Gladstone has said: "It is impossible to relate the fortunes of this heroic people, without begetting in the mind of the reader a restless suspicion of exaggeration and fable. It was in 1493 that the printing-press was set up at Cetinje, in a petty principality, they who set it up being men worsted by war and flying for their lives. It was just seven years after the earliest volume had been printed by Caxton, in the rich and populous Metropolis of England; and when there were no printing-presses in Oxford, Cambridge, or in Edinburgh." In 1893, therefore, the four hundredth anniversary was celebrated at Cetinje, and in honour of this anniversary nearly all the universities and learned societies of Europe, including Oxford, sent representatives with addresses of congratulation to the Prince.

Although all appointments are made by the Prince himself, it is always the best men who are found in the responsible posts, and, like the Russians, they have a splendid system of local government. Each of the villages has its own council—elected every three years, with power to hold land, levy rates, distribute charities, and appoint supervisors of education. They have found the solution of the women's rights question, in allowing the women to speak at the meetings, as long and as often as they like, but they are not allowed to vote. It will thus be seen that they have had for generations what we have only just got, namely, Parish Councils.

Cettinje is the smallest capital in Europe, having only about 3000 inhabitants, and in an Englishman's eyes it looks little more than a village. It lies in a hollow in the mountains, and is liable to be flooded during the heavy autumn rains. The water drains away into the Adriatic by subterranean outlets, and in very hot summers washing has sometimes to be forbidden for fear of a water famine.

Before 1847 there were only two buildings of any size—the residence of the Prince Bishop and a building called the Billiardo, erected in that year by Peter II. The inhabitants lived in comfortless one-storey huts, and had no idea whatever of commercial life; and their restless, warlike disposition made it difficult to introduce trade and refining influences. Peter II. initiated many reforms, but they were not carried out to any extent until the late Prince Daniel was made Vladika. He was the first ruler who in any degree combined within himself the patriotism of his native countrymen with an active mind, which had received its training according to the lights of Western civilisation. This Prince was the last of the Vladikas, or prince and bishop combined in one, for, upon his appointment, the present ruler refused to accept the spiritual power as well as the temporal, his motive being to evade the Canon of the Greek Church, which enforces celibacy, and so enable him to found a royal family. With him, therefore, starts a new *régime*, and the Principedom will in due course be handed down from father to son in the usual way, whereas the old Vladikas were elected from one or other of the chief families.

Cettinje is symmetrically laid out—three streets with trees planted down each side, dividing it longitudinally; this arrangement being due to the Prince, aided by Mr. Edile Slade, the late English Ambassador, who was also instrumental in planning many of the roads and other improvements.

In the centre of the town is a large square, surrounded by the principal Government buildings. On one side is the palace of the Prince, built in 1868, and on the opposite side are two villas occupied by his sons. Further on

is the above-mentioned Billiardo—a long, low building, painted red, and having very small windows. It was originally a palace, afterwards the Government offices, and now an Institute of Theology. It derived its curious name from having contained the first billiard table that was ever introduced into the country, and which, by the way, had been dragged up that ladder at Cattaro, which has been already mentioned. I have been struck with the fact, that both in Italy and Montenegro the game of billiards appears to be much more universally played than with us. The tables may not be as good, but they are much more accessible, and a game that would cost a shilling in England can be played in these countries for about twopence. There is a table at the hotel, which is well patronised, and it is amusing to see the Montenegrin endeavour to negotiate difficult shots whilst encumbered with their armoury, which they do not even lay aside for a game of billiards.

In the extreme western corner of the square stands the Monastery of the Basilian Monks and the residence of the Metropolitan, or Archbishop. It was originally built in the fifteenth century, but, being devastated by war, was restored by the Empress of Russia in 1742. There is a church, with the usual detached bell tower, and a cemetery, some of the inscriptions on the memorial stones being very interesting. The church is built in the Byzantine style, and in it are the tombs of Prince Daniel and Vojvoda Mirko, father of the reigning Prince. Peter II., who died in 1830, is also buried here. He was canonised by the Holy Russian Church in 1834, and on St. Peter's Day a great crowd of pilgrims visit the tomb and kiss his vestments. They have great faith in their saint, and recount many miracles which he is said to have performed, and which, as in many other places, are simply due to the invalid pilgrims getting a change of air and scenery, which is probably what any good doctor would have recommended. The monks are very kind to strangers, and only too glad to show a visitor all that they think will interest him. A kindly feeling exists between them and their Roman Catholic brethren, who

worship in the church dedicated to the Virgin, close by.

There is an excellent college for girls erected by the late Empress of Russia, and a technical school for boys. At the theatre or Letskidom, dramas written by the Prince are sometimes performed; his plays, which are chiefly historical, are very popular with the Southern Slavs and have also been acted in Russia. Outside is one of those fantastic shaped lions of St. Mark, that are so often seen in Dalmatian towns, and the only explanation of how it got there appears to be that it was taken in some raid on the Venetians; for, although the latter were most enterprising, they never actually penetrated into the black mountains.

The usual park has been well laid out, but it looks rather new at present.

Near the entrance to the town are the Arsenal and Museum, the latter containing trophies of the wars with the Turks. Except the iron crown of Roumania, which was made from a Turkish cannon, after the brilliant victory which gave them their independence, only Montenegro, of all the Balkan peoples, have any trophies to show. In the museum at Cetinje, the walls are covered with Turkish swords and rifles, and over one thousand Turkish medals taken on the field of battle tell a tale which needs no comment.

The prison is a low one-storey building from which it would be easy to escape. The prisoners are treated very leniently, however, and every morning for about two hours they are allowed to stroll about in the open and eat anything their friends may bring them, whilst some of the minor offenders are also allowed to smoke. The worst offenders have a chain from the waist to the ankles. It seems strange that the many facilities for escape are not taken advantage of, especially as long terms of imprisonment are not unknown. To English people, accustomed to associate isolated cells and high walls with prisons, and who are continually hearing of escapes and insubordination, the Montenegrin system seems strangely inadequate, yet, judging by the order-

liness of the people, it would appear to work very well.

One of the finest views in the country is obtained at a place called the Belvederie, on the road to Rieka. At this point are seen the clear waters of the Lake of Scutari, the mountains to the west clothed with pine woods, whilst on the east are the snow-capped mountains of Albania. Directly below is the tiny River Moraca, with its twists and turns; and here and there are villages, from the churches of which one may probably hear the faint tinkling of bells.

A good deal of the import and export trade is still in the hands of the Albanians, who, having no particular interests in the country, only stay long enough to make a modest competence, and then take the road home to Scutari. The beautiful silver-mounted pistols and chased jewelled yataghams, which lend such splendour to the girdles of the men, are made in the Albanian town of Prisrend, whilst most of the silver and gold filigree work that one sees, comes from Ipek and Jakova.

Scutari, which is the principal town of the country, is famous for the skill of its cloth-workers, and the dexterity, of its gold embroiderers.

Prince Nicholas the First, is a finely built specimen of his race, standing over six feet in height, and when wearing the full national costume, he looks a worthy successor to the old fighting Vladikas. He was born in 1841, and married Milena, the daughter of Wojwoden Peter Vukotic, in November, 1860. He has had nine children; the princesses are greatly beloved, and probably as a family they are the finest looking in Europe. The Prince is very popular, and being well read, has added to the literature of his country by several books and volumes of song. There is scarcely a cottage in the country where one may not hear some of the Prince's verses sung to the accompaniment of the plaintive one-stringed "Gusla."

Mr. Gladstone has stated that in his deliberate opinion the traditions of Montenegro, now committed to his Highness as a sacred trust, exceed in glory those of

Marathon and Thermopylae and all the war traditions of the world. His prompt action in enforcing the Turks to adhere strictly to the stipulations of the Berlin Treaty, by the demonstration of the British fleet at Dulcigno, as well as the general personal interest he takes in their country, has made him a great favourite with the Black Mountaineers. There is not a man in the country who does not know and venerate the name of Gladstone.

The country is now advancing with a firm step towards the western standard of civilisation ; for, with their conservative temperament, an advance by leaps and bounds would only retard real progress. The Prince has the satisfaction of knowing that he has arranged a code of laws, which, whilst they fit in well with the habits of the people, are yet modelled on the western standard.

The means of intercommunication are continually being improved, more roads having been made during the last twenty years than in the preceding one hundred years ; whilst postal and telegraphic systems have been introduced. There are over fifty elementary schools, besides the college for girls and a secondary school for boys, and at Cetinje there is a public library and newspaper room.

HERBERT KILBURN SCOTT.

The Stage.

MATTERS in the theatrical world have materially brightened up now that the Easter Holidays are a thing of the past, and I am sure that my readers will allow me to wander from the beaten track, by extending a cordial welcome to Miss Kate Terry, who, by the time these pages are being read, will have made her re-appearance on the stage in the character of Mrs. Faber, in "The Master," at the Globe Theatre.

* * * *

Mr. R. D'Oyly Carte is filling the Savoy at each performance, by his timely revival of "The Gondoliers," which is played as well as ever, and one is glad to see Miss Rosina Brandram in her original character.

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Mr. Alfred Moul having tendered his resignation as general manager of the Alhambra, Mr. C. Dundas Slater, the acting manager of the Empire, has been appointed to the post. Mr. Slater has been at the Empire since 1889, and his universal courtesy has made him liked by all, and I, among no doubt many others, wish him every success in his new home, where he takes up his duties on May 9th.

* * * *

"The Conquerors," which Mr. Alexander has produced at the "St. James's," has not received the ovation that was expected for it, although Mr. Alexander has given Mr. Paul M. Potter, the author, every opportunity, and has staged the piece in a wonderful and sumptuous manner, and though the acting is in every way good, the piece is not one calculated to display the talents of the

artistes. Still, "The Conquerors" is a play which all should see, and one may be assured of an evening's good amusement.

* * * *

Apparently American plays are now the fashion, and judging from the many productions that are to be seen in London, which first saw light on the other side, the idea has caught on. "The Conquerors," already referred to, "The Belle of New York," "The Heart of Maryland," and "Too Much Johnson," have all been imported from the States, and are drawing crowded houses.

* * * *

The last nights are announced of both "The Geisha" and "The Circus Girl," and both have had a phenomenal run, and have been the brightest plays that I have witnessed for a long time. The new piece at the Gaiety is announced for the 30th inst., and I shall give more particulars of this next month.

* * * *

Managers are complaining of the falling off in their receipts, and are at a loss to understand the reason. I heard a good one given the other day by an old theatrical manager, who said, that now that suburban London was so well provided with theatres, where the finest companies are to be seen, why should they come to the West End. Take Croydon with its Theatre Royal, Islington with its Grand, Stoke Newington with its new Alexandra, and the many others, while in all other suburbs, theatres and music halls are being built, much to the detriment of the West End houses.

* * * *

"The Medicine Man" is the title of the new play, described as a melodramatic comedy, by Messrs. H. D. Traill and Robert Hichens, which is to be produced by Sir Henry Irving at the Lyceum on May 4th.

* * * *

The alterations at Earl's Court Exhibition are rapidly approaching completion, and now that the evenings are

lengthening, this will be, as of yore, the favourite evening amusement, and Mr. Imre Kiralfy does not intend to be behindhand in his desire to cater for every class of his patrons. Side shows will be in abundance, and the large Empress Theatre will be occupied by an entirely new and interesting naval display. Given fine weather, good music, and agreeable companionship, one cannot spend a more agreeable day, than at Earl's Court.

SOLO.

I SHOULD like to call the attention of all my readers to the Annual Festival of the City of London Truss Society. This event will take place at the Albion, Aldersgate Street, on Thursday, May 12th, at 6.30 for 7 p.m., and the Lord Mayor will take the chair. The Prince of Wales is patron of the Society, and it is an interesting and important fact that since its establishment in 1807, this charity has relieved over 530,000 poor people in the Kingdom. If any of my readers will, on my recommendation, decide to help the Society in any way, they will meet with every attention and consideration at the hands of the Secretary, Mr. John Whittington, 35, Finsbury Square.

BELGRAVIA

JUNE, 1898.

St. Philip's-on-the-Sea: a Novel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MISS BERRINGTON'S TROUBLES.

THINGS were very uncomfortable indeed at Woodville, for Mrs. Berrington was in a terrible quandary as to what she should do in the Livermoor imbroglio, and as Maud was the unhappy cause of her worries, she did not fail to visit upon her the effects of her anger and bitter disappointment. Day after day and hour after hour she poured out the vials of her complainings upon Maud's devoted head; she painted in the most glowing colours the joys and advantages from which her daughter was so foolishly turning away; she tearfully exclaimed at her obstinacy, disobedience, and want of filial affection; and then she turned to and exaggerated "all she went through" in the genteel poverty of Woodville. The fact is, Mrs. Berrington was almost frantic at seeing so rich a prize already within her reach, and alas! slipping irrevocably from her eager grasp. Lord Livermoor's memento she had carefully stowed away under lock and key, and she had—with a reprehensible want of truthfulness, it must be confessed—permitted Maud to understand that that costly token of his lordship's affection had been restored to the donor; such a step as the return of the bracelet the widow had seen at once would be an end of

all things, and she could not part with this last vestige of a hope that Maud would be persuaded, until she should be firmly convinced that there was indeed no chance at all of seeing that young lady in the exalted position offered her. Moreover, how was she to answer Lord Livermoor's letter? He had said he was coming in person next week. This week was rapidly gliding away, and he must be already wondering why he had not heard from her. Was ever woman so harried and worried! and all for the silly scruples of a foolish girl who did not know what was good for her, and who would not let her own mother tell her; it was too bad of Maud, it was worse than bad, it was positively wicked, a perverse flying in the face of Providence. Maud *must* give way, and Mrs. Berrington resolved to try her powers of persuasion once more, and then, if she did not succeed in convincing her daughter, and bringing her into a proper frame of mind, there must indeed be an end of the matter, and the dazzling prospects of rank and wealth must be given up for good and all; and for the moment, sad to say, Mrs. Berrington almost hated her only child for being so obstinately blind and so wickedly perverse.

"Now, Maud," she said at lunch on the day, in the middle of the week, on which she had come to this determination "there must be an end to all this either one way or the other."

"So far as I am concerned, there is an end already," said Maud, wearily, for she was worn out with her mother's persistent jobations, and was, indeed, looking quite ill. "It is quite, *quite* impossible for me to do as you wish."

"Why is it impossible, pray?" said her mother, angrily coming up to the charge, "what do you want more? is not Lord Livermoor good enough for Miss Berrington?"

"Oh! mother, dear, why are you so angry with me? you know it is not that. I cannot, and I will not marry a man I do not like, nay, cannot bear; you have said all that can be said in favour of it, and you have not changed me in the least."

"But Maud, dear," said her mother, in a more dulcet

tone, "I do not want to be angry with you, I am only thinking of your good (and the £1000 a year, etc., etc., she might have added). I have not been an unkind mother to you, Maud."

"You have been the very best of mothers before this dreadful man came with his horrible persecutions," said Maud, rising from the table with a weary sigh.

"Stay a minute, Maud," cried her mother, as Maud was moving towards the door, "and sit down, for I *must* talk to you. Now listen to me, and do not be impatient and say anything in a hurry. It has come to this, you must decide *now*; I ought to have written to him before, and he must be wondering why he has not heard. Now listen, Maud, and think well before you speak; and I do beseech you to think a little of me, and my miserable position here, if you do not care for the great advantages of such a marriage, before you answer. Lord Livermoor wrote to me when he sent you that kind present about which you were so ungrateful; he said all manner of nice things about you, and he is coming to St. Philip's next week to—to see you——"

"Coming to St. Philip's! to see *me*!" exclaimed Maud. "Oh, tell him not to come! I will *not* see him! It will do no good, and I refuse to be persecuted in this way; it is—it is—unmanly, ungentlemanly!"

"How *dare* you speak like that, Maud?" cried her mother, "and how can you be so blindly foolish to your own interest? Any girl would jump for joy at such a chance; he might pick and choose from the highest in the land; and here are you almost a pauper—and what is to become of you when I am gone, I cannot tell—and you wickedly and ungratefully turn away from a Providential—— Why is it, Maud?"

"Oh, mother, I have told you over and over again," said Maud.

"Ah, I think I begin to see now," said her mother, slowly and suspiciously, as Lord Livermoor's question as to "someone else" came into her mind, "there must be some strong reason for such folly, and I believe, Maud, you have been deceiving me all along; I believe there is

someone else in the way," and Mrs. Berrington keenly scrutinised her daughter's face.

The warm colour glowed in the cheeks of the lovely brunette, and she lowered the gaze of her dark eyes to the ground as her mother gave vent to her sudden suspicions. This evident confusion was all the confirmation Mrs. Berrington wanted to make these new fears of hers certainties, and she came close to her daughter, and stood over her in much agitation. "It is true, then?" she said; "*this* is the explanation of it all? And, pray, may your mother ask who is the fortunate individual who has gained the affections of Miss Maud Berrington? *Is* there any one else?" she asked again, as poor Maud covered her face with her hands and did not answer. "I insist upon knowing who it is!"

"I cannot tell you, mother," faltered Maud at last, still hiding her glowing face from her mother.

"You cannot tell me? and, pray, why not?"

"He—he—does not—know—he—has not spoken—to—me," sobbed Maud, breaking down at last, under her mother's anger, and, sooth to say, not a little incited thereto by the misery of her own love affair, for the Reverend Coleson had met her that very morning, and, believing her to be the *fiancée* of the mighty peer, had merely raised his hat, and passed her by with a look—almost unconsciously to himself, be it said—of stern reproachfulness.

"And is this my daughter, Maud Berrington? this love-sick girl, crying because her lover will not look at her? I am ashamed of you, Maud! *you* a 'victim of misplaced affection'! And who is the stony-hearted one who cannot see the charms—? pah! it is most contemptible—it is——"

"How *can* you be so cruel to me, mother?" cried Maud, suddenly rising; and, with a reproachful look from her tear-laden eyes, she hurried out of the room, ran upstairs, and locked herself in her own chamber, where she remained in dismal seclusion until the dinner hour.

Now were Mrs. Berrington's worst fears confirmed, and she was forced to own to herself that the game was

indeed up, and that it was of no use for her to urge Maud any further along a course which was so plainly repugnant to her. It was a terrible blow to Mrs. Berrington, and she was bitterly incensed against her daughter. To give up such a splendid future for some silly girlish dislike to the man who had so much to give; this was a kind of obstruction in the way which Mrs. Berrington had imagined she could have removed with a due amount of persuasion, and coercion; but "someone else" in the road was a sort of obstacle she had not calculated upon, and this new difficulty, taken in conjunction with Maud's very openly expressed dislike to Lord Livermore, she felt to be almost insurmountable, and she was consequently reduced to despair. All those glowing visions of future wealth and distinction were dissolved into quite the thinnest air, and the disappointed woman had to face the difficult task of disabusing the enamoured peer of all his dreams of domestic bliss with his fair young connection. How she hated the "someone else," whom she regarded as the prime cause of all her disappointment! for if Maud's affections had not been engaged in the matter, Mrs. Berrington felt—though she was wrong here—that her daughter would have seen the manifest advantages of the alliance Lord Livermore proposed for her, and would have repressed her dislike to him, and have accepted his offer with all its contingent comforts.

And who was this obstructive "he"? The St. Philip's young men were a migratory race, they followed in the footsteps of their fathers for the most part, and were attached to the different Public Services, officers in the Army or Navy, or Indian Civil Servants. They were seldom at home, and then for no lengthy periods; for St. Philip's had not much to offer in the way of amusement, and, as a rule, the young men preferred to pass their leaves where they could amuse themselves after the manner of their kind with hunting, shooting, and fishing, or in the pleasant hurly-burly of the modern Babylon. No, as she ran over in her mind the youthful male scions of the Parkites, who had from time

to time played the part of social meteors, and flashed across the St. Philip's firmament, she could think of no one for whom Maud had shown the slightest preference, though she had come in for a large share of their passing attentions. The idea that Mr. Coleson—of whose propinquity to the pill that bore his name Mrs. Berrington was, of course, fully aware—the idea that *he* should venture to lift up his eyes to her daughter never even entered into her thoughts ; and even had such a monstrous piece of impertinence on the Curate's part made itself evident to her, it would have been inconceivable to Mrs. Berrington that her daughter should stoop so low as to entertain for one moment the idea of a connection with trade. So far had the good lady travelled from the associations of her youth ; for her own people had been respectable trades-folk, and the very small sum of money, with its equally minute yearly interest, which was only secured to her because the late Honourable John, her spouse, had been unable to get at it, this little stand-by came to her from her mother, who was nothing more nor less than the relict of an oil and colourman in quite a middling way of business, who had eked out her narrow income by letting lodgings in the West-end, her daughter occasionally acting as Abigail. It was in this capacity that she succeeded in gaining a hold upon the erratic affections of that Honourable lodger Lord Wrenford's impecunious and bibulous brother ; such a hold, in fact, as impelled him to lead the fair Lucinda to the Hymeneal altar, and after that into a life of constant misery, which only terminated in the death of that withered sprig of an aristocratic tree.

No ; no suspicion as to the real state of the case ever occurred to Mrs. Berrington as she wondered who the fortunate individual could be who had gained such a hold upon the affections of her daughter as to impell her to refuse the wiles of the charmer, Lord Livermoor, backed up, as all these charmings were, by the very decided vote and interest of her mother. However, before the day was out she would at any rate be mistress of this secret, and in the meantime some communication must be made to the rejected one ; and how to tell him the sad truth,

and at the same time to leave some sort of a loophole for future operations towards an alliance with him and his coronet, was a mental exercise not to be overcome without deep thought, and some talent for diplomacy withal. She knew in her heart that the case was an utterly hopeless one, and yet, at the same time, she could not force herself to take the final step and put an end to Lord Livermoor's and her own hopes for good and all ; and so, after many failures, and much angry tearing up of letters, she produced an epistle which struck dismay into the heart of his lordship, and, indeed, brought about a *dénouement* which his correspondent certainly never intended and as certainly never desired. She asked him to put off his visit for a little while as Maud was not at all well ; she vaguely hinted at some slight difficulties in the way, and ended by fervently hoping that all would be well in the end.

There was, indeed, some truth in Mrs. Berrington's excuse in her letter to Lord Livermoor, for Maud was certainly far from well ; she was worried by her mother's constant and angry insistence upon the unpleasant subject of her elderly would-be lover, her hourly complaints of Maud's ingratitude ; she was troubled, too, by the constant references to her exalted prospects, with which her friends assailed her in her walks abroad, and by the evident incredulity with which her denials of the honours she was preferred to were met ; an incredulity due to those fine diplomatic gifts of which Mrs. Berrington was giving such examples. Mrs. Laver had said to Mrs. Modbury that she would not believe Maud's denial until she had heard what Lucinda had to say ; and, in order to satisfy her mind on the interesting point at issue, she had made an early call upon Lucinda, and had cross-examined that lady with some severity ; Mrs. Berrington was quite aware that all that passed would, in a very few hours, be the common property of St. Philip's, and she had parried her interlocutor's questions most successfully, refusing to give a distinct answer, enlarging upon the kindness of their reception at Livermoor Castle, and the niceness and goodness of the owner of that ambitious

pile, and leaving Mrs. Laver with the impression that, if Maud were not exactly engaged to Lord Livermoor, she would without doubt find herself shortly in that happy and enviable position.

"It is nonsense for Maud to make such a mystery of it all," Mrs. Laver said to her friend, Major Pilton a day or two after, as he entered her drawing-room. "I had a long talk with Lucinda the other day, and, though I could not exactly bring her to book, she did not deny the soft impeachment; I believe there is some difficulty in bringing him up to the scratch; at any rate, Lucinda told me he is coming down here soon, and that certainly looks like business."

"That is just what I was coming in to tell you, Mrs. Laver. He *has* come, saw him myself, getting out of a fly at Woodville," said the Major, delighted to be the first in the field with this interesting item of news. "No mistake about it this time."

"Well, I always shall say that it would be much more suitable if it were Lucinda," said Mrs. Laver, who had, indeed, her own reasons for this opinion, for the absent Laver was considerably older than she was, and the marriage of that aged and crabbed bachelor with the blooming and fresh young *débutante* had made no small stir, and given the occasion for much tongue exercise in the Indian orbit in which the old Commissioner and his youthful bride had moved.

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Laver, there are others who think the same," said the Major, with a sigh, thinking of his friend the Curate's bitter disappointment.

"Why, Major," said the merry grass-widow, laughing, "you don't mean to say *you* are a victim to the power of Mistress Maud's black eyes?"

"Ah, Mrs. Laver," said the Major, gallantly bowing, with his hand on his heart, "*you* know better than that."

"Don't be so absurd, Major," she answered, laughing still, "you ought to know better than to say such things to an old married woman. But, seriously, I don't think Maud is particularly elated at her high good fortune; she

always most strenuously denies it, and the poor girl really looks quite ill."

"Look here," said the Major, a sudden light dawning upon him, "shouldn't wonder at all if it wasn't a plant between the mother and his lordship!"

"Nonsense, Major, they can't *make* the girl marry him."

"Eh, but they *can* make things uncommon unpleasant for her, and persuade her against her will. No girl could like such an old rhinoceros as Livermoor; and, 'pon my word, I believe I'm right! you may depend upon it the mother is worrying her into it, while all the while there's a young fellow, as good as——," and here the Major pulled up short, for he suddenly perceived that he was letting the cat out of the bag.

"*What* were you saying?" asked the curious and eagerly attentive Mrs. Laver, "'a young fellow as good——' This is becoming interesting, a regular romance, and pray, *who* is the blighted being in question?"

"Aw—ah—I was thinking aloud, you know; only my fancy, I assure you," stammered the Major, taken aback.

"Now, that is ridiculous, Major," said Mrs. Laver, shaking her head at him, "and you know it is; there are only two—and it must be Mr. Coleson!" she exclaimed, for she had her own reasons for believing that the other St. Philip's eligible—namely, the handsome Dolly—was otherwise engaged.

"Oh, not at all, quite another person," said the mendacious Major, angry with himself at having betrayed his friend's secret, "but I must be going," he added hastily, taking up his hat, making his adieux, and moving towards the door.

"It is no use," laughed his tormentor; "you can't deceive *me*—it *is* Mr. Coleson. And now I come to think of it——"

But the rest of her sentence was lost to Major Pilton, who rightly dreaded her powers of pumping and beat a hasty retreat, very rudely cutting her short in the midst of her words.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MATCHMAKER.

THAT ornament of the British army, Mr. Adolphus Lamley, did not judge it expedient to mention to his father, or to his sister, his interview with Mr. Waddell and the results thereof. Alicia was much interested in her brother's love adventure, but she curbed her curiosity; for she wished to preserve, as she had said, an attitude of masterly neutrality in the matter. The alliance her brother proposed for himself was extremely distasteful to the proud Miss Lamley, yet, at the same time, she did not want to make an enemy of her brother; and, as she could not be an aider and abettor in this unfortunate affair, she determined to take no part in it whatever. Her father, on the evening of Dolly's confession to him, was too full of rage at his son's folly to keep the subject to himself, and found a safety-valve for his anger in inveighing against the peccant Dolly to that young man's sister.

"Never was so upset in my life!" he exclaimed, as Alicia came in to give him his cup of tea. "'Pon my word, it's monstrous the way that young idiot goes on! I won't stand it, by George!"

"Who is the young idiot in question, and what may be the way he is going on?" asked Alicia, who was, of course, perfectly aware of what her father was alluding to.

"Don't be absurd, Alicia!" said that gentleman; "of course, you know what I mean. Do you suppose I don't know that he has been pouring out his love-sick nonsense to you in the garden? I hope to heaven you have not been encouraging him, Allie?"

"Is it at all likely that I should eagerly embrace Miss Waddell—what a name!—as a sister-in-law? The more you oppose Dolly, the more desirable will the young lady appear to him, and the more obstinately set upon her will

you make him ; whereas, if you leave him to himself, and treat the whole thing with silent contempt, Dolly will soon tire of her, and see matters in a proper light. It is not the first time he has been what he calls in love, as I know at the cost of many hours of listening to the various catalogues of charms possessed by the different objects of his adoration."

"I believe you are right, Allie ; best to leave him to come to himself. But an auctioneer's daughter !—Heaven preserve us !" exclaimed the advocate of liberty, fraternity, and equality.

And there the matter dropped, and the bristling subject was not alluded to in Dolly's presence, greatly to his content.

But his silence on the matter did by no means signify his consent to his parent's ultimatum ; and many were the consultations he held with his ally, Mrs. Laver, as to "how the Governor was to be brought round," consultations at which, if the truth must be told, Miss Mary on one or two occasions assisted ; for Mrs. Laver's house was not interdicted, and if Mr. Adolphus Lamley happened to be paying the mutual friend a visit, pray was that Mary's fault ?

"Your father was here yesterday, Dolly," said Mrs. Laver on the last of these occasions. "He is very angry with you, young man."

"Did he say anything about us ?" said Dolly anxiously, and looking at Mary, who had happened to call in to see her friend.

"He did. He enlarged upon the affair at some length, and ended up by asking my advice. I was very much flattered, I assure you."

"Oh! what did you say, Mrs. Laver ?" asked Mary.

"I shan't tell you, my dear, or I shall make you conceited. I wonder your ears did not tingle, I praised you so. But I am afraid we must wait a little longer. Mr. Lamley is full of the subject, and, now he has opened it out to me, I will keep on with it. The constant dropping may in time wear away his stony-hearted opposition, and all will be merry as a marriage-bell, eh, Mary ?"

And Mrs. Laver kissed her little *protégée* encouragingly.

"How kind you are!" said the grateful girl.

"Well, I like you both, and I think you will make a charming couple," said the matchmaker. "By the way," she went on, "you two are not the only disconsolate lovers in the Park, if what I hear is true. There is another pretty little romance going on at Woodville, or I am very much mistaken."

"Ah! I think I know something of that," said Dolly.

"And pray, what do you know?" asked Mrs. Laver, curiously.

"I don't know whether I ought to say anything—breach of confidence, don't you know," said Dolly.

"And so our revered deputy pastor has been confiding his woes to *you*?" said Mrs. Laver.

"Why, how on—how did you find out anything about it?" asked Dolly, astonished.

"A little bird told me—at least not such a very little bird—a bird in a straw hat, with a bald head, and a face inclined to the rubicund."

"Oh! Pilton, of course," said Dolly, laughing. "He is an odd confidante for Coleson to make; but they are next-door neighbours and great chums. Still, I wonder at his telling his troubles to such a leaky vessel as the Major."

"The poor Major!" laughed the lady. "He did not mean to tell, you know. It slipped out unawares."

"Well, I am afraid it is a hopeless case," said Dolly, "for the Berringtons have been staying with Lord Livermoor, and Pilton tells me he saw him getting out of a fly at the Woodville gate yesterday afternoon."

"Yes, so he told me," said Mrs. Laver. "Of course, they are engaged; I wonder when it is to be? I am sorry for Mr. Coleson."

Now, Mary had been listening with all her ears to this colloquy, and as her conversation with Maud as they returned from Mrs. Argle's Zenana Mission came freshly to her mind, she was certain that her lover and her friend were wrong.

"Why, Mrs. Laver and Dolly," she exclaimed, "I am quite sure you are mistaken. Don't you remember, Mrs. Laver, how strongly she denied it all at the Vicarage?"

"Oh! all that goes for nothing, my dear," said her friend; "it was not settled then, you know. But now, you see, the man has been there—is there now, for aught we know—and it is certainly a case. No girl would be such an idiot as to refuse Lord Livermoor."

Mary had her own opinion on this point; she thought she knew of one girl, at least, who would not exchange her handsome soldier-lover for the wealthiest and highest Peer in the realm.

"I am quite, quite sure you are wrong," she said, with the most emphatic decision. "I walked home with Miss Berrington, and she talked to me quite quietly about it, and I am sure she will never marry Lord Livermoor—quite sure."

"I am sure I hope you are right, Mary, for poor Coleson's sake. He is terribly cut up about it," said Dolly, feelingly.

"I suppose she has thrown him over for the Peer; they must have been very quiet about it, then, for I am certain no one had the least suspicion of such a thing," said Mrs. Laver.

"Oh, no; it has not gone so far as that," said Dolly. "He has never even spoken to her, but—well, I ought not to tell you, I suppose; but you seem to know something about it, and you may as well know the truth. The fact is, Coleson is awfully fond of her, and he was making up his mind to speak out when our bloated aristocrat appeared upon the scene, and effectually upset his apple-cart."

"Oh, do tell him, Dolly," cried Mary, "I know there is nothing in all that; and we all like Mr. Coleson so much—it would be splendid! I do so pity him. I am sure she likes him; any girl would—he is so nice!"

"Young woman," said Dolly, laughingly, "I shall have to call out the parson if you speak of him in such enthusiastic terms. Nevertheless, I certainly will drop him a

hint. It is better for him to be put out of his misery than to go on in this tantalising way; the fellow looks quite seedy."

"How could Lucinda Berrington talk to me about Maud and Lord Livermoor if there had been nothing in it?" queried Mrs. Laver, musingly. "Why, she quite made out that, if there was no engagement, it was quite a matter of time. I cannot help thinking you are mistaken, Mary, my dear, after all."

"Oh, it's as plain as a pikestaff," said the astute Dolly. "Don't you see? Girl's mother wants the match, of course; girl can't swallow his lordship—and I don't wonder at it; he is not a very savoury morsel—she won't have him at any price; mother eggs him on—hopes to bully the girl into it, eh? And, upon my word, Mary, I believe you are right, and Mistress Maud *has* a sneaking kindness for Pilton's Bishop, as he calls Coleson; and that, don't you see, keeps her up to it, and makes her blind to the coronet, diamonds, and all the rest of it. I shall certain give Coleson the benefit of my wise inductions, eh?"

And here the subject dropped.

But, before Dolly had a chance of carrying out his kind intentions towards the Curate, that gentleman had received a knock-down blow in the intelligence which his other confidant, Major Pilton, had conveyed to him. However strenuously he tried to convince himself that there was absolutely *no* chance of a happy ending to his unfortunate attachment, there still lurked an obstinate particle of hope in his heart that, after all, appearances might be deceptive, and the various tokens of Lord Livermoor's attraction towards his, the Curate's beloved, his often-attendance at Woodville during his stay with the Lamleys, the visit to Livermoor Castle—these things might portend nothing more than a fatherly interest; while, as for what Mrs. Laver and Major Pilton said, these two gossiping cronies had been so often in the wrong in their surmises as to the business of their neighbours, that really there was no dependence to be put in what they said. It was possible that Mrs. Laver and Mrs.

Berrington were playing at cross-purposes, and that it was—why, of course, it must be *Mrs.* Berrington Lord Livermoor was fluttering—if so elephantine an individual could be said to be fluttering—around. Having come to this sage conclusion, and finding in the idea a pleasing solution of the worst of his difficulties, Charles Coleson embraced it with enthusiasm, and lost no time in confiding to his mother the result of his cogitations.

Now, though Mrs. Coleson was anything but as certain as her son persuaded himself he was certain, that, after all there was nothing in it, yet she was so delighted to see her boy once more in good spirits, that she had not the heart to give him the benefit of the suspicions which still possessed her, and, with pardonable duplicity, she feigned an acquiescence in her son's new conclusions, which she was far from feeling.

It was on the evening of this change in the Curate's sentiments, that the Major strolled in to inform his friend of this new confirmation of the downfall of his hopes.

"Heard the news?" he began, with his usual formula. "The great bashaw has been down here again. No mistake about it this time; I saw him myself, getting out of a fly at Woodville. Mrs. B. has hooked him at last."

"I am not so sure of that, Major," said Coleson. "I am inclined to think it is Mrs. Berrington herself who is to be an ornament of the British aristocracy."

"Not a bit of it—not a bit of it. Don't you make any mistake. Mrs. Laver is quite clear on that point—had it from Mrs. B. herself."

"Well, but what did Mrs. Berrington say to her?" said the Curate, loth to part with his consoling idea.

"Said he was coming down to see her daughter, and square it off; and here he is, as large as life. Shouldn't wonder if the banns were put up next Sunday. Wonder how you call an earl's banns?" said the unfeeling Major.

"Are you certain Mrs. Berrington said that?" asked Coleson.

"I don't say she said 'square it up,' you know, but words.

to that effect—words to that effect. Sorry for you, old man, but no mistake about it. Told you no girl would snap her fingers at a coronet. Never mind. Look at me; been in the same boat myself, and here I am, as jolly as a sand-boy!

“‘If she be not fair to me,
What care I how fair she be?’”

“Eh?—that’s the philosophy of it, Bishop!”

And with that the Major took his departure, greatly to Coleson’s relief; for his jovial way of looking at things jarred painfully with the Curate’s melancholy thoughts.

“I suppose they are right, after all,” thought Coleson. “It is a great temptation to a girl even if she had—but it is all supposition on my part; most probably she never gave me a thought, and yet—pshaw! I daresay it is all fatuous idiotcy on my part. At any rate, it is unmanly, childish, to suffer myself to be so hipped by it all. I was a fool to let it out to Pilton and Lamley—good heavens! *what* a fool! But I don’t think either of them will say anything; and I shall get away for a while—give up the curacy, perhaps—for I don’t want to pose before the St. Philip’s world as a blighted being.”

And, having come to this sage determination and the end of his cigar at the same time, the Curate retired to rest in a very unhappy frame of mind.

CHAPTER XX.

LORD LIVERMOOR’S DISAPPOINTMENT.

THE commendable skill which had marked Mrs. Berrington’s management of Lord Livermoor had, up to the moment of his receiving her last letter, met with signal success. A certain amount of coyness he had expected from Maud, and he was not so infatuated as to suppose

that a girl of her age would receive the addresses of a man of sixty with eager and instant acceptance. Nevertheless, he had a very distinct idea of the value of the position he had it in his power to offer her. He was well aware that the mother was entirely on his side, and, though rather taken aback at the delay in the fulfilment of his hopes, he fully expected that very shortly Maud's objections would be overcome, and that all would end as he desired; and this the more particularly as he was assured he had no young and attractive rival to fear.

Mrs. Berrington's diplomatic epistle, however, opened his eyes somewhat to the true state of affairs, and its ambiguous phrases, and the evident embarrassment under which his correspondent was writing, filled him with an uneasiness almost approaching to dismay. There was a lurking suspicion of something concealed in the letter, and a very few moments' consideration determined Lord Livermoor to go to the fountain head at once, and put an end to a suspense which was materially interfering with the one object of his life—his peace and comfort, to wit.

If Maud were indeed ill—and he had his suspicions on that point—it behoved him, as an ardent suitor, to shew the keenest anxiety; and, if she were disposed to accept his addresses, surely she would be more than pleased at the tender solicitude his instant attendance upon her must display.

The widow's vague hints, then, had a very different effect from what was intended, and produced a state of mind in Lord Livermoor which she would have been the last to have desired.

The train which bore him St. Philip's-wards was a light one, and the compartment he occupied he had to himself. He quickly tired of the papers and reviews he had bought to beguile the tedium of his two hours' journey, and, there being no one in the carriage to distract his thoughts with fidgetings or furtive watchings, he gave himself up to a calm and unbiassed consideration as to the present state and probable end of his wooing.

He first took out Mrs. Berrington's letter, and, as he carefully read over again its slightly incoherent periods, it

began to dawn upon him that the "slight difficulties" she confessed to *must* be a more favoured individual—some former lover, either unknown to the girl's mother, or, what was more probable, known and dreaded, and thrust into the background by the prospect of the higher prizes in life he, Lord Livermoor, had shown so decided a disposition to bestow upon the subject of his sudden attraction.

It might possibly be, also, that Maud—who had certainly given him no very great encouragement, and, indeed, had met his advances with a distaste which he now plainly enough perceived—it might be that she cared not one jot for his rank and his riches, or did not care enough for these advantages to take them with him for a make-weight. It is not to be supposed that so loftily-placed a widower had escaped the soft attentions of the mothers in fashionable Israel; on the contrary, despite his age, he had been the object of much manœuvring. Very flattering proposals, if not in direct words, at least in hints plain enough, had been made him, and he was quite aware that he need not bemoan himself in the desolate condition of the widower a moment longer than he liked; for maidens as fair as the lovely Maud, and of an infinitely higher degree, were more than willing to accept his hand, and with that hand the comfortable adjuncts of pin-money and settlements his wealth ensured.

Still, these willing sacrifices on the altar of interest and "a proper establishment" had failed to attract him, possibly because of this very willingness; and the absolute callousness with which Maud had regarded his matrimonial advances had made him only the more set upon gaining her goodwill.

But, to tell the truth, Lord Livermoor was getting a little tired of it all. He was, if not exactly disgusted, yet certainly displeased at what he now regarded as Mrs. Berrington's duplicity and manœuvring; and, at the same time, the girl's scarcely disguised dislike to him, which had at first attracted, now repelled him; and the upshot of his long self-communings was that he made up his mind to put his fortune to the touch, and, unless he met with a grateful and pleased acceptance, there and then to give

up the game, and to throw the handkerchief in a direction where he was sure of its being snatched up with an eager acceptance.

Fortunately for this his purpose, Mrs. Berrington was out when, as reported by the observant Pilton, he alighted from the fly at the Woodville gate, and, more fortunately still, Maud was within and was alone in the drawing-room when, to her infinite dismay, the maid announced Lord Livermoor.

The keen glance which he directed at Maud convinced Lord Livermoor that Mrs. Berrington had not deceived him in *one* particular; for he could not fail of perceiving the worn and weary look of lassitude the harassments and anxieties of the past few weeks had produced; while the still more evident dismay his appearance upon the scene provoked gave him a sinking at the heart, and boded no good success to the suit he was determined to make.

"You are astonished to see me, Maud," he said, taking her hand and looking her earnestly in the face. "I heard from your mother this morning that you were ill, and I could not refrain from coming to see the truth about you for myself."

"It—it is very kind of you, Lord Livermoor," said Maud, hesitatingly; for she had a very plain perception as to what was coming, and in the unstrung state of her nerves she scarcely knew how to bear the strain. "I am sorry mother is not at home."

"And I am glad, Maud," said Lord Livermoor, most ungallantly, and plunging at once *in medias res*, "for I want to speak to you alone, my dear. I want to know whether you will consent to make a lonely old man happy. Stay!" he exclaimed, as she was about to speak, "do not answer me without giving yourself time to think. It cannot be a new idea to you, Maud, for I think I have shown my—my affection for you, and your dear mother has promised to speak for me, a promise she has doubtless fulfilled. Of course, I know there is much against me—the disparity in our ages, for instance; but I think—nay, I *know*—that if you will listen to me I can make

your life a happy one. I shall repay your kindness with a gratitude and a consideration you might fail of receiving at the hands of a younger man."

And he looked at the fair object of his addresses with anxious inquiry.

His slow and ponderous enunciation of these sentences gave Maud the time to compose herself in some degree, and to frame her refusal in the politest terms she could find at so short a notice. Still, she was intensely agitated, and she hesitated as she spoke.

"It—it is very kind of you, Lord Livermoor. I am deeply sensible of your kindness; but, indeed—indeed, it is impossible. I cannot——"

"My dear Maud," interrupted Lord Livermoor, with a consideration and a kindness Maud had not expected from him, "do not, I beg of you, distress yourself. I confess, I had but a faint hope—none the less I am deeply disappointed. I would have tried—but it is of no use talking of that now. You are ill, your mother told me you were far from well; I do hope that I have had no hand in robbing those cheeks of their roses and those eyes of their brightness."

And again Lord Livermoor took her hand, this time with quite a fatherly tenderness.

Poor Maud was much overwrought. The scene she had just passed through had naturally agitated her, and now Lord Livermoor's unexpected kindness touched her deeply, and she quite broke down.

"I—I cannot help it! I have been so unhappy!" she sobbed out, as she rose hurriedly to leave the room.

"Pray—pray do not give way like this, Maud!" cried the Peer, in great distress, and still holding her hand in spite of her efforts to free herself. "There is more in this than appears—I fear your mother has been worrying you. Tell me, my dear, if in any way I can help you, you may command my best——"

Here Mrs. Berrington's astonished voice interrupted him; for in their agitation Maud and Lord Livermoor had not heard the slight noise which accompanied her entrance upon the scene.

"Lord Livermoor!—here!—and you, Maud, in tears! Why, what——?"

But Lord Livermoor, in his start at the sound of Mrs. Berrington's voice, had dropped Maud's hand, and the girl seized quickly upon the opportunity, and escaped through the door her mother had left open.

"You are surprised to find me here, Mrs. Berrington?" said Lord Livermoor, as soon as Maud had gone. "Your letter made me very anxious about that dear child, and I could not resist the impulse which urged me to come down at once, and to find out the truth about her."

"It is very kind of you, I am sure," said Mrs. Berrington, still much exercised in her mind as to what might be the upshot of the evidently agitated interview she had interrupted. "Maud cannot but be moved by such kindness," she added.

"The truth is, Mrs. Berrington," said Lord Livermoor, placing a chair for that lady and taking one himself—"the truth is, I am not unnaturally tired of the peculiar position I found myself in with regard to your charming daughter. I fear, my dear madam, that your kind solicitude for me has led us both into a most unfortunate error."

"Oh! I hope not—I hope not, Lord Livermoor," said Mrs. Berrington, unwilling to believe the worst. "There has been so little time, and Maud is so young. Still, she could not be so utterly foolish as to refuse your kind intentions towards her."

"That, then, I am truly sorry to say, is precisely what my beautiful young friend *has* done," said Lord Livermoor. "I have just, alas! ascertained that there is no hope for me in that direction, and——"

"How *could* she?—how *could* she?" interrupted Mrs. Berrington, actually wringing her hands in her grievous disappointment. "After all your kindness, and all that I have said to her!"

"I think *I* am the chief sufferer, Mrs. Berrington," said Lord Livermoor, who had a very shrewd idea as to what Maud's mother had said and how she had said it, and who was, indeed, sore at the position he found himself in,

and not a little angry with the lady whose manœuvrings had placed him in that position. "You have, I fear," he went on, "been—er—mistaken all along. It is very unfortunate, very unfortunate; and I regret, almost more than anything else in the whole affair that my charming young friend should have been made so miserable on my account."

"I am sure, Lord Livermoor," began Mrs. Berrington, in a tone of apology.

"Pardon me, my dear madam," said the Peer, interrupting her; "I think something is due to me in this matter. Your excellent opinion of me, for which I am duly grateful, has led you into a—a mistake which has caused me much anxiety and disappointment, and has had the melancholy effect of seriously troubling your dear daughter. I have always had a strong suspicion of the fact—of which I know you were unaware—that—that, in point of fact, your daughter's affections are otherwise engaged."

"I assure you, Lord Livermoor, I knew nothing of this until——"

And here Mrs. Berrington stopped confusedly, as she remembered her duplicity in hiding the facts of Maud's confession to her in her last letter to Lord Livermoor. The slightly sarcastic tone which he had used in saying "your excellent opinion of me, for which I am duly grateful," and the suspicious pause he indulged himself in in alluding to the lady's "mistake," were quite enough to show Mrs. Berrington that her little game was quite understood, and was, only too plainly, quite played out.

"May I ask *when* you knew of Maud's—er—affections being pre-engaged?" asked Lord Livermoor, still in the same sarcastic tone; for he had not failed to notice the widow's confusion as the word "until" slipped from her tongue's end and put a sudden end to her sentence. He had had good faith in Mrs. Berrington's repeated asseverations as to there being no "somebody else" in his way, and the soreness he felt at his rejection was by no means mollified at this new instance of the widow's managing.

"I only knew yesterday," said Mrs. Berrington, still somewhat confused; "and you will remember, Lord Livermoor, I did say—I hinted at some impediment."

"‘Some slight impediment, easily to be removed,’ I think you said," said the Peer; "but if Maud's agitation and her worn and anxious looks are any gauges as to the depth of her feelings, I scarcely think the word ‘slight’ exactly describes the impediment to which you alluded. I think, as I said just now, that something is due to me in this matter, and I do beg of you, Mrs. Berrington, not to place any more obstacles in the way of your daughter's happiness. I am sure she would not choose unworthily."

"I only knew of it yesterday, and I have not the faintest idea of who the—person can be," said the widow.

"I was just about to ask you who my favoured and fortunate rival might be," said Lord Livermoor.

"She will not tell me; she locked herself in her room yesterday, and no persuasions of mine could prevail upon her to tell me this morning. All she would say was that the—the person had not spoken to her——"

"Not spoken to her!" exclaimed the Peer. "Then there is no engagement broken off on my account? I am truly glad of this, *truly* glad. I feared—but, my dear Mrs. Berrington, you must allow me to apologise for my most unjust suspicions."

"You surely did not suspect me of—of hiding such a thing from you?—of putting undue pressure upon Maud?—breaking off an engagement!" interrupted Mrs. Berrington, in a tone of injured innocence.

"Well, well," said the Peer, "if any such unworthy suspicions did, for the moment, enter my mind, I tender you my most sincere apologies. In the meantime, the question is, what is to be done for Maud?"

"I have no patience with the girl!" exclaimed Maud's mother, angrily. "It is *too* absurd of her—it is more than that, it is absolutely *shameful*! That a daughter of mine should go mooning and moping about"—and here a certain flavour of the widow's early training was

perceived, and duly noted by Lord Livermoor—"moon-ing and moping after some young man or other who has, perhaps, never even given her a thought! It's—it's positively indecent!"

"My *dear* Mrs. Berrington," said the Peer, not a little amused, in spite of his vexation, at the widow's plain-spoken anger, "you must remember that we do not know all the circumstances of the case. The—the gentleman in question may be paying his addresses to your daughter. There are certain—er—preliminaries, if I may say so, in these matters, and he——"

"Oh! I have no patience with it all, as I say," exclaimed Mrs. Berrington, "and for the life of me, I can *not* imagine who it possibly can be."

"Probably that handsome boy of my friend Lamley's?" suggested the Peer, who had all along had a slight uneasiness in that direction.

"I cannot tell you—I cannot tell you, I am sure," said Mrs. Berrington. "It is all a heavy trial to me. My daughter, my—my only child—is—estranged from me. She—she will not confide in her own m—m—mother, who loves her—who would do *anything*——"

"Do not, I beg of you, be so disheartened!" cried Lord Livermoor, who had gone through one scene already that afternoon, and who feared the rising storm of which the widow's broken sentences, tears, and well-displayed handkerchief were the too evident portents. "All will be well; only be kind to Maud, I beg of you. I shall always take a deep interest in her, and shall be grateful to you for any news."

And with this Lord Livermoor rose, with the intention of hastily making his escape before the storm reached its height.

"There's the b—b—b—bracelet?" sobbed the disappointed widow, as she shook hands.

"I trust your daughter will not think of returning my little present," said the Peer.

And with that he bowed himself out, and left the widow to indulge by herself in her grief at the loss, at one fell swoop, of a thousand a year and all the high and

mighty privileges she would have enjoyed as the mother of the Countess of Livermoor. 'Tis true she had the costly "little present" of Lord Livermoor's under lock and key, and this was a slight—alas! *how* slight—alleviation; for she determined, as she phrased it to herself, that "wild horses should not draw" that precious bauble from her fond possession.

CHAPTER XXI.

MRS. LAVER CONSOLES HERSELF.

"MAJOR, old man, I congratulate you," said one of that gallant officer's numerous friends to him as he entered the smoking room in the club. "Seen the papers? But, of course, *you* knew it all long ago?"

"Eh?" said our military friend; "knew what? * Nobody has left me a legacy—nobody likely to. What on earth do you mean?"

"Why, old Laver's dead. Here you are:—'We regret to announce . . . John Laver, Esq., C.B. . . . long public services . . . Commissioner of Chundlebund,' &c., &c. Oh! it's all right; he's dead enough."

"Peace to his ashes!" said the Major, piously; "but I don't see how the melancholy fact affects *me*. Never saw the late lamented in my life."

"What a humbug you are, old man, begging your pardon! She's a widow now, and all you have to do is to hang your hat up in the hall. I congratulate you, Major! Monstrous rich old fellow, the Commissioner; regular old miser; *lacs* of rupees!"

"I wish I may get 'em, then," said Major Pilton, with a sigh. "No such luck—no such luck for the old Major!"

"Old! why, you are in the flower of your youth, Major, or, at any rate, in the prime of your robust manhood!"

"Ah, now, none of your chaff, young man!" said the Major, with a good-humoured grin.

"But seriously, Major, I thought you were *au mieux* with the fair widow?"

"So I was—so I was—but I am not in the running now; been cut out, root and branch, stock, lot and barrel," said the Major, with a redundancy of simile.

"Who is the lucky man, then?" asked his friend.

"Why, Lamley, to be sure—Lamley of The Towers. Portentous swell, any amount of coin, too. It's always the rich ones that get the luck."

"Oh, it's Lamley, is it? Well, I did hear——"

"Of course you did! There every day; regularly domesticated; tame cat in ordinary; cut me out shamefully. Young Lamley like a son, too; quite a happy family, I assure you. Done with the *Times*?"

And the Major deposited his portly person in a comfortable armchair, and began to digest the solid mental food provided by that important journal.

His friend's report was a perfectly true one. Old Commissioner Laver had indeed departed this life somewhat suddenly, and to the keen delight of his native servants, who had a wholesome dread of his ferocious bullying and his abnormally nasty temper. His marriage had not been a particularly happy one; his love of solitude and his morose disposition rendered him a poor kind of a companion for a young, lively, and society-loving dame, while his miserly habits made his riches but a light make-weight when weighed in the balance with his age and his general crabbedness. The nuptial tie was as galling to him as it was to his young wife, and he daily cursed the stupidity which had led him, at his advanced age, to lay his hand and his fortune at the feet of the young and lovely daughter of an old friend. Relief, if not joy, possessed him when the doctors pronounced the climate of his part of India quite unsuited to the health of his wife, and he agreed with alacrity to the proposal that she should return to England, while he went back to his well-accustomed routine of solitary existence, and soon almost forgot he had ever indulged himself in matrimonial

bliss. He had made a handsome settlement upon his wife, and now she found he had remembered her in his will, and had left her a most comfortable fortune—perhaps as some atonement for the wedded widowhood to which his marriage with her had condemned her for so many years.

Now, Mrs. Laver was by no means a heartless woman; she was touched, also, by her husband's—somewhat tardy, it is true—generosity, and she grieved to think of the lonely old man, whom she had solemnly engaged to love honour, and obey, dying in a far-off land amidst strangers and hirelings. Still, it is not to be denied that the handsome fortune she found herself to be possessed of had its consolations, while the new feeling of liberty was not an unpleasant one. Her first marriage had been one *de convenance*—a compact entered into in green and inexperienced youth, urged on with many arguments by interested relatives, and agreed to without very much thought as to the unpleasant consequences of so unequal a companionship. Now, as soon as she allowed herself to think, she could marry a man of her own choice, and the handsome, manly person of her comparatively new friend and neighbour at The Towers did, as the Major shrewdly surmised, come into the field of her mental vision as a possible *pretendant*.

Mr. Lamley's evident partiality to her society had greatly flattered her. She considered him a remarkably clever man; his quick, arbitrary ways attracted rather than repelled her. She wanted someone she could look up to and respect, someone she could admire, and she owed to herself that she had found this someone in Mr. Lamley. She liked Dolly also—indeed, she was very fond of that handsome young man; and the only drawback to the arrangement she proposed for herself was the undeniable fact of the fair and haughty Alicia. That proud damsel inherited her father's somewhat arrogant disposition, and Mrs. Laver dreaded the battles royal which must perforce take place before Alicia could be dispossessed of the domestic reins she had

held for so long, and relegated to the ignominious place of the second fiddle in the home concert.

This was a difficulty, however, which was by no means insuperable ; and should Mr. Lamley "come forward"—of which proceeding on his part Mrs. Laver had but little doubt—some way would probably open up by which the new wife would be relieved from the oppressions she justly enough feared from her stepdaughter-to-be. Alicia might marry, perhaps, or she might—though this seemed in a high degree doubtful—she might knuckle under ; or she might elect to live with some convenient relative. At any rate, Mrs. Laver was quite determined upon one point, and that was that she certainly would not join the eligible Mr. Lamley at the hymeneal altar until some settlement of this peculiarly knotty point should be arrived at.

She was revolving these matters in her mind the afternoon of her arrival from London, whither she had proceeded at the urgent summons of her husband's solicitors, where she had stayed for a week involved in a bewildering maze of business, and whence she had returned that morning with the pleasing consciousness that she was a widow exceedingly well left.

"Talk of the angels!" she thought to herself, as the door opened and the subject of her self-communings was announced, and received by the widow, as he entered, with a very becoming blush which he did not fail to mark ; neither, be it said, did he fail to observe how extremely pretty Mrs. Laver looked in all her trappings of woe.

Mr. Lamley was not likely to be an unwilling victim to the power of the widow's charms, to say nothing of her wealth, of which many rumours were already flying about. He could not count upon Alicia's continued companionship ; for, in spite of that haughty damsel's contempt for the male sex, it was at any rate possible that she might, sooner or later, take one of the despised ones for better, for worse. Mr. Lamley, moreover, was much attracted by the widow : first, by her good looks, which were quite undeniable ; secondly, by her *piquante* and easy conversation ; and thirdly, by her complacent acceptance of him,

Mr. Lamley, as being the high and lofty personage he undoubtedly imagined himself to be.

So the game, which had, indeed, begun already before the demise of the lamented Laver—though, of course, in all propriety—was likely to be a plain and open one from the beginning, above spoken of, to its natural end in the conversion of Mrs. Laver into Mrs. Lamley.

A few expressions of sympathy and consolatory remarks on Mr. Lamley's part, almost necessary under the circumstances, were received by the widow with the sighs and downcast looks also appropriate to the occasion.

"I can't say I ever met poor Laver," said Mr. Lamley, "for, as you know, he was not in my Presidency; but, of course, I have often heard of him. A man very much respected—sad loss to the service, don't you know."

"So kind of you to say so, Mr. Lamley," said the widow. "Poor dear man! it *does* seem so sad to think of him dying there all alone! I should feel so much more easy in my mind if I could only have been there."

And she took out a black-bordered handkerchief and pressed it to her pretty eyes.

"You must not give way, my dear Mrs. Laver," said her friend, much moved at these signs of distress. "Of course, it was not your fault, you know. So sudden, wasn't it? No time to telegraph and get you out."

"No, poor dear soul!" said the widow, still occasionally bringing the black-bordered handkerchief into requisition; "there was no time for anything, but it grieves me more than I can express all the same. I seem to feel I ought not to have left him."

"You cannot blame yourself for that, my dear madam," said Mr. Lamley; "for, as you have often told me, the doctors left you no choice, though I can well imagine poor Laver's grief at having to part from you."

Mrs. Laver had her own opinion about her late husband's "grief," and she did not deem it necessary to proceed further with this branch of the doleful subject.

"I feel I ought not to see anyone yet. I ought to have told my maid I was not at home," was her next remark.

"How could you be so cruel, Mrs. Laver?" said Mr. Lamley, perceiving his opportunity and promptly seizing upon it. "Yon have been away already for more than a week, and I cannot tell you how I have missed you."

"It is very kind of you to say so," rejoined Mrs. Laver, again with a slight accession of colour at this somewhat broad hint as to the way the wind was blowing; "it is pleasant to feel one is missed."

"You see, there is no one I can talk to, as I can talk to you," proceeded the wily charmer. "I am so worried with Dolly, and now Alicia is becoming troublesome, too."

"Alicia!" exclaimed the widow, roused to keen interest at the mention of the "obstacle's" name. "Why, what has Alicia——"

"What has Alicia done? you were about to ask. Well, it is not exactly what she *has* done, but what she wants to do."

"You astonish me!" exclaimed Mrs. Laver, deeply interested.

"And you will be more astonished when I tell you all, though I ought not to trouble you with my family worries, particularly when you are in such distress."

"Not at all, not at all," said the widow, with, it must be confessed, a slight touch of hypocrisy. "On the contrary, it takes my mind off my own grief."

"In that case," said Mr. Lamley, "I shall hesitate no longer. Ever since we lived in South Kensington, Alicia has been bitten with the Ritualistic mania. I am a plain man myself, and, for my part, I like a plain service; but I see no harm in all the flowers and flummery which seem to have such attractions for Allie. All the same, it was a nuisance at first, and worse than a nuisance afterwards. I never could get the girl to myself, for one thing; she was always attending some function or another, rushing about from church to church after favourite preachers, indulging herself in extensive slumming, too, though I put a stop to *that*; for I did not want the whole house to be down with small-pox or fever——"

"You were quite right, Mr. Lamley," interpolated the

widow, who, in truth, had not much sympathy with that kind of entertainment.

"Yes! so glad you think so," said Mr. Lamley. "Well, the next thing was, she joined some society for giving culture to the labouring classes. Culture, by George!—fact, I assure you—as if *they* wanted culture; and almost every night she was out in some dangerous East End parish or other, playing and singing to the roughs, and with quite unsuitable kinds of people, too. Of course, the poor girl has no mother, and I felt it my duty to put a stop to it all. I don't mind the Ritualism, though *that* was a bore, and, in fact, quite demoralised the whole household, for Alicia was never able to look after the maids—but I could not, and would not, stand the other nonsense, and so I told her."

"And, of course, she gave it up?" said the widow, as Mr. Lamley paused.

"That was precisely what she did, but in such a grudging and reproachful manner as to put me at once into the position of a brute—a stern parent, don't you know, and all that kind of thing. Most unpleasant!"

And he paused a few moments* ruminating on the sad experiences he had gone through, while Mrs. Laver murmured her sympathy.

"Well," he resumed, "and not to bore you, my dear Mrs. Laver, the long and the short of it is, I could not put up with it at all; and, to tell you the strict truth, I struck my tent, packed up bag and baggage, and came down here simply to get out of the intolerable nuisance of it all."

"Well, but, Mr. Lamley," said the widow, "there are no slums here, and I am sure there is not much Ritualism at St. Philip's, or, indeed, at any of the other churches in the town."

"That is exactly the truth, Mrs. Laver; and if the interesting items you mentioned *were* to be found in St. Philip's I should not be boring you with this long jobation about my troubles; it is precisely for this reason that Alicia is so discontented; I can get her to take an interest in nothing; she professes to despise society, and is almost

rude to my friends when they call, or when we entertain them. And now she has taken a new fad in her head ; she wants me to let her join a Sisterhood ! Good Heavens ! Miss Lamley a Sister of Mercy ! attending ragamuffins in fever wards, or scrubbing out the floors in the house, or convent, or whatever they call it ; it's monstrous ! ”

But Mrs. Laver was by no means struck with the monstrosity of Alicia's project ; inasmuch as in the carrying into effect of that project, she instantly saw an easy solution of certain domestic problems which, as we know, were just then exercising her mind ; and so she did not respond to Mr. Lamley's ejaculations with the ready alacrity he evidently expected. Alicia relegated to an Anglican nunnery ! Could anything be more fortunate for the widow's matrimonial projects, to which the young lady was the only barrier ? If Mrs. Laver could only bring the father into a proper frame of mind on the subject the way would be clear, and the new Mrs. Lamley would enter upon the scene of her duties and pleasures, and find that scene a fair field with no favour to fight against. And as the widow was of an ease-loving disposition, and detested anything in the shape of a contest, she paused or a considerable time before she made answer.

“ Eh ? ” said Mr. Lamley, tired of waiting, and slightly astonished at her hesitation. “ Eh ? Monstrous now, isn't it ? ”

“ Well—I am not quite so sure—it is very good of your daughter—there is so much suffering, you know—and so few have the nobility to—to come forward—I am quite sure I haven't—it *does* seem a pity to——” hesitated the widow.

“ Why, you don't mean to say you advise me to give in to her ? The very thought is almost shocking to me ! ” exclaimed Mr. Lamley.

“ No, I don't exactly advise—if I may presume to use such a word to you—I do not exactly advise you to give in *altogether*. ”

“ Well, but what am I to do ? Things can't go on as they are ; it is quite unendurable, ” said Mr. Lamley.

"Well, since you ask me—though, of course, this is only *my* opinion—if she were my daughter, I should be disposed to let her make a trial of it, don't you know. It is quite possible she might soon get disgusted ; and even if she, after some time, found herself to be happy in such a useful sphere—well, in that case you could decide what you would do. After all, persons of quite the highest distinction *do* find a vocation in that kind of thing, and, if you are careful as to the—er—Institution she joins, you could make sure of your daughter living amongst suitable persons ; of this I am quite certain."

"You astound me, Mrs. Laver," said her friend, in a tone of vexation ; "I should have thought you the last person to—but still there may be something in what you say, and I will, at any rate, make what inquiries I can, and will, if you are kind enough to do so, inform you as to the result, and we can then see what is best to be done."

The little word "we" came as pleasant music to the widow's ears ; evidently Mr. Lamley must "mean something," or he would not, surely, have consulted with her, as to such intimate domestic concerns?

"By the way," Mr. Lamley went on after a brief interval of musing, "as to Dolly, I am thankful to say his leave is up, and he has had to join his regiment ; another case of 'out of sight, out of mind,' I trust ; a most ridiculous affair ! Imagine ! an auctioneer's daughter !"

"I will not hear a word against my dear little Mary," said the widow, shaking her fan at Mr. Lamley, and laughing ; "she is a most charming little woman, any man would fall in love with her ; and, to tell you the truth, I think our friend, Master Adolphus, is more deeply touched than you imagine."

"Pooh !" said the young man's father, "he has been in the same desperate condition dozens of times before. I don't object at all to the girl, quite charming as you say, and a friend of yours, my dear Mrs. Laver, but the father—come now, you *must* see the thing is impossible."

"Of course the—er—profession is distressing, but

Mary's father is a most respectable man, highly esteemed, a magistrate, and so rich, don't you know ; people are not so particular nowadays, and the mother is quite the dearest old soul in the world."

Thus did Mrs. Laver stand by her absent friends.

"Well, well," said Mr. Lamley, impatient of the topic, "I don't think we need trouble ourselves upon that score. I think I know Adolphus too well for that to worry me much."

And with that he rose to make his adieux, leaving Mrs. Laver in a very contented state of mind, for she had now no doubt as to her friend's intentions towards her, and any lingering uncertainties which might have troubled her soul, were disposed of by the confidential attitude he had observed towards her by the warmth of his greeting, and the still greater warmth of his farewell ; so that Mrs. Laver was tolerably certain that after a decent interval her lover would declare himself, and that when the tedious necessary period of widowhood—which she was quite determined to considerably abridge—should be over, she would find herself in the proud position of Mr. Lamley's wife, and the mistress of The Towers. Moreover, she then and there made up her mind that when this so desirable end should be accomplished she would, at the earliest opportunity, pay Lucinda Berrington some ancient scores which had been running up during the past few years, and this prospect gave an added zest to her content.

GEORGE LAMBERT.

(To be continued.)

The Traitor of an Hour.

THE Marquis de Maurville was in a quandary, as was plainly manifested by his impatient and irregular stride up and down the narrow chamber, which constituted his sole apartment in the castle of Mautrepale, in Navarre.

"So!" he cried at length, addressing a noble who, leaning backwards in his seat, followed de Maurville's restless stride with an anxious eye. "So I, of all Henri's train, am to be sent on this mission. 'Fore Heaven, my lord de la Orflevre, is there none other to do the trick save I?"

He paused in his walk to face his companion.

"None, Marquis—none!" replied the other, slightly changing his position. "It was the King, Henri himself, who selected thee!"

With an impatient shrug of the shoulders de Maurville approached the casement; flinging it open, he gazed wistfully across the open, level country, rendered hazy and almost indistinct by the summer evening mist, which was slowly creeping athwart the fertile pastures of Navarre.

"I have done much for Henri," de Maurville exclaimed at length. "Things—I speak not idly nor yet in boast—that many, if not all, in Henri's train would have shrunk from doing. He has ordered and I have acted, oft at the peril of my life; yet this—yet this——"

"Thou art afraid of doing?" queried his companion.

"No, Gaston de la Orflevre; thou shouldst know me better than to cast that slur at me. I am not afraid as men understand fear; I am afraid in a sense, my lord, because—bah! why prate I to the world my reasons?"

The heavy arras which shielded the doorway at the further end of the room being roughly drawn aside at this juncture, prevented de la Orflevre from replying. Hastily turning in his seat, he beheld a tall, slight man, whose

orange doublet and hose were almost completely shielded from view by his heavy, clinging, sable-hued cloak. A slouch hat, from which depended a sombre plume, almost hid the outlines of the oval face beneath it.

"My Liege!" cried de la Orfèvre, starting hastily to his feet.

"Welcome, Sire!" exclaimed de Maurville, as, doffing his hat, he strode towards his august visitor.

"Ha! Maurville, methought thou wouldst be here; I came to ask a favour of thee," said Navarre, with one of those winning smiles he knew so well how to use.

"A favour, Sire?" De Maurville raised his eyebrows questioningly.

"Aye, a favour," repeated Henri, flinging one side of his cloak over his shoulder and sinking into a cushioned seat.

"Then count it as granted, Sire."

"Hush! Speak not at random," cried the King, sharply, rising from his seat and pacing the floor with nervous stride. "'Tis a task from which the bravest might shrink and yet not be called craven. Thou knowest the Chateau de St. Hubert? See!" he exclaimed, grasping de Maurville's arm and pointing out of the casement. "'Tis yon fortress, whose castellated ramparts loom out sombrely through this cursed, even mist!"

"Surely, Sire, 'tis de St. Hubert's stronghold."

"Aye, even so. I have heard news to-day, Marquis—tidings of treachery—which chills my heart, because it is perpetrated by one who cloaks his infamy with the glamour of friendship."

"Sire, is de St. Hubert——?"

"Aye, de St. Hubert has sold his King and his country, too, de Maurville, to the treacherous Charles."

De Maurville started.

"Sold me!" reiterated Henri, bitterly. "De Maurville, I must checkmate his dastardly move in time, else Navarre, Hugonotism—aye, common humanity will receive their death-blow when that she-devil, the Queen, and the intriguing Charles occupy the throne that to-day is mine." He paused for lack of breath and then con-

tinued hurriedly, "De Maurville, yon cursed schemer's stronghold must fall to-night. It is the key of Navarre. The taking of it I trust to thee—and thee alone. Take some half-score of my train, visit him under the cloak of friendship or as an ally for the invasion of Navarre. I leave it to thy ready wit as to what to say, but obtain the postern gate ere dawn, and if its keeper refuses to keep silence under a bribe of gold, give him one in cold steel."

"Sire," replied de Maurville, haltingly, "I have, up to now, obeyed thee in all things; but this thing, as I have just told my lord de la Orflevre, I cannot do."

"Do I hear aright?" cried de la Orflevre, rising.

"My lord has good ears, I believe," replied de Maurville.

"Thou dost refuse?" queried Henri, calmly. "Does the peril of the venture daunt thee?"

"My Sire, has peril ever daunted me? The Sieur de St. Hubert has ever been my friend; I am secretly betrothed to his daughter. How can I, then, go to his castle and visit him under the cloak of friendship so as to be able to bring ruin and desolation on his home? Sire, I speak to thee now not as subject to King, but as man to man. How can I sit at his board, quaff his wine, and yet all the time plan his death?"

"De Maurville, scruples are childish in time of war—love, ridiculous! Think what is at stake—Navarre, thy king, Hugonotism; all will receive their death-blow if thou refusest."

"Sire, I know the odds of the fatal game," replied de Maurville, hoarsely, "but others in thy train have as stout a heart and as long a head as I; aye, even more versed in diplomacy's whiles. My Liege, I have never asked thee a favour until now—let another of thy train do this, for I *cannot*."

Henri passed his hand through his dark chestnut locks; then, crossing his arms, gazed pensively out at the rapidly darkening landscape. For a few moments he remained thus; then, once more turning to de Maurville, said, in low, even accents:

"Marquis, it grieves me that I cannot grant you this,

thy first favour; if it concerned myself or my kingdom, I would do so. But the Cause—it must not suffer; Rome shall not trample out the struggling flame of Hugonotism because private feelings forbid our stretching our arms to shield it from harm. Hubert de Maurville, yon Chateau must fall ere night cedes its place to day. Thou knowest its châtelain as well as I do; thou alone, of all my army, canst place yonder fortress in my hands; therefore, thou art the man who must do the deed."

"Sire, I cannot."

"Hubert, I ask you as a favour—for our Cause?"

"I implore thee——!"

"I beg of thee as a friend?"

"Henri, my King, I must refuse thee this."

"Hubert, Marquis de Maurville, I, as thy King, order thee to do my bidding!"

"Sire, hear me ere thou orderest me to betray my friend," cried de Maurville, hoarsely. "Give me any duty which fancy bids thee give me—let me lead a hopeless charge, a cover for a retreat, a defence for a dismantled battlement; but, as thou hopest for thy salvation, bid me not trick my friend, the father of my betrothed."

Henri tapped the floor impatiently with his foot.

"I grieve that I must give thee so hateful a task," replied Navarre; "yet it must be as I have said! Ah! Hubert," he continued sadly, "methought that thou didst care more for our cause and myself than for love, or for treacherous friends."

"My Liege, have I ever studied my own interests before thine?"

"True, yet prove thyself worthy of the trust I place in thee, to-night."

"Is this final, Sire?"

"I regret it is, Hubert!"

A pause, during which de Maurville strode feverishly up and down the chamber. Then he cried hoarsely:

"Be it as thou wilt, Navarre; ere the day breaks—

may God forgive my treachery, de St. Hubert shall be in thy hands."

* * * *

In a large panelled room, but scantily furnished by massive oaken furniture, sat two people, a man and a girl, the former broad of shoulder and grizzled by many a campaign, sat in a heavy armchair, gazing absently at a helmet, the polished surface of which refracted the dim rays of an oil lamp which burned dimly on a table beside it.

Beside him, resting her chestnut-locked head against his armoured chest, sat his daughter, the winsome Yvonne de St. Hubert.

"And is Navarre to be sold to Charles?" asked the latter, after a lengthened pause, during which her father drummed his fingers absently on the table beside him.

"Aye, child."

"It will mean a second Roncevaux!"

De St. Hubert shuddered.

"Hast thought that de Maurville will be in the massacre?"

"Can I help that? Henri has insulted me, and 'fore Heaven, I would not let even a brother stand betwixt me and my vengeance. Yvonne, thou hast troubled me much of late about the Marquis. What matters it to thee whether he fall or no?"

Another pause, broken only, when the renegade noticed a tear splash on his daughter's hand.

"Yvonne!" he cried, rising and facing her, "Can it be possible——?"

She rose, and throwing herself into his arms, said brokenly:

"We are betrothed!"

"Poor child!" muttered St. Hubert hoarsely, as folding her to his heart, he smoothed her chestnut hair with loving touch, "why didst thou not tell me of this before. Have I ever said nay to a thing that thou didst desire, if it was not to thy harm. But I will not chide thee in this thy hour of grief. Unhappy child, how I pity thee! Had I known such to be the case, I would never have thus crudely broken the news of the intended surprise before

dawn, when Charles would have been here, and the massacre ended. Who knows I might have kept thee in ignorance of it, till some court gallant had wooed and won thee. Poor child! Poor child!"

A step outside the door, coupled with a sharp knocking on the same with a mailed glove, caused de St. Hubert to step hastily away from his daughter, and, with his hand on the hilt of his sword, imperiously bid the person who knocked enter. In answer to the summons, the massive door was swung open, admitting the mailclad figure of de Maurville.

"By my fay, 'tis Hubert! Welcome, Marquis, welcome!" exclaimed de St. Hubert heartily, extending the hand which had but lately grasped the hilt of his sword, whilst Yvonne, with a happy cry, flung herself into de Maurville's outstretched arms.

"Thanks, Guilbert, for thy kindly welcome!" cried de Maurville, grasping the proffered hand of St. Hubert. "Believe me, 'tis twice as cheering to hear those kindly words, after two months' lack of the same. And thou, Yvonne? By my fay! thou'rt comelier than ever! Good lack! but thy eyes dance more wildly than they did of yore. Guilbert, I should have asked thee before, if thou didst approve of me as a son. Yet so fearful was I that another, meeter far than I, would be chosen as the husband of Yvonne, that I was fearful to ask the question. I have, I know, violated all rules of Navarrese etiquette; I have no excuse to offer, save that of my true love. I am a man of not much import, but my word is as good as any parchment bond. Therefore credit me, when I offer my love as the only excuse I have to offer."

De St. Hubert smiled indulgently.

"Maurville," said he, laying his hand kindly on the shoulder of his companion, "I have not known thee all these years without knowing also your worth. De Maurville is a name honoured even in vice-plagued Paris, a name for which any woman would suppress hers, without thinking with a qualm on the future. Hubert, I accept from thee an excuse which I would from none other. Eh! Yvonne," he continued indulgently, "have I spoken as

pleases thee? So! so! right pleased am I. Hubert, thou poor love-stricken sieur, thou hast, I doubt not, violated *the rules* by kissing Yvonne before now. Heed not my presence."

"Guilbert, of a truth thou'rt an honest, sterling friend," cried Hubert, grasping the extended hand of de St. Hubert. "Then little witch, dare I claim my tribute from those ruby lips of thine—ah, so! nay, be not so chary with thy kisses, little mistress; thou hast but half paid the toll—aha! now in verity am I paid in full," he cried, letting her go, flushed and dishevelled from his embrace.

"Come, a goblet of the Navarre wine," cried de St. Hubert cheerily. "Love making was ever tiring work—nay?—ah, well," he cried, filling two goblets, and giving one to de Maurville. "Thy health, Hubert, and to thy betrothed. Quaff such a toast at a draught, sirrah! So! now let me fill it again.

De Maurville smiled gaily.

"So thou hadst heard of our love idyll, so opposite to those of our class, before I told thee, Guilbert; yet thou hast, as yet, not told me thy opinion on't?"

"My opinion? Of a truth that lies with Yvonne; yet this will I say—that I could wish for her no better lord than thou."

"My thanks for that speech, my lord. And thou, Yvonne, dost think the same?"

Yvonne raised her face to his by way of reply, a hint which de Maurville was not slow to take advantage of.

"And now, what brings thee here?" asked de St. Hubert, filling up his friend's goblet.

"A diversity of reasons," replied de Maurville, evasively quaffing his wine at a draught. "I came to see thee—Yvonne——"

"Me? Ha! ha! ha! Yvonne, perhaps? Me? Ho! ho! ho! I see that thou hast not forgotten how to jest, even in Navarre's sober train; nor yet how to drink, by my troth."

"I am no longer in the service of Navarre," muttered de Maurville.

"No longer under the banner of Henri?" echoed de St. Hubert, incredulously.

"As thou sayest, I have served him as a dog would its master, shed my blood in his service, imperilled my life for him. Now I have no King, no cause, no friend; for Navarre the Hugonot, Navarre the good, has cast me off as an old shoe." He laughed discordantly. "Such is a Prince's gratitude."

De St. Hubert gnawed his moustache for some moments in thought; then, stretching out his hand towards de Maurville, cried:

"Thy hand, comrade; for I, too, have deserted the standard of Henri the Faithless. The blade which I once used in his service shall to-night be raised against the royal head of the ruler of Navarre. My vengeance, for some while delayed, will to-night be reeked on he who once called himself my King."

"What is that thou sayest?" queried de Maurville, every feature quivering with well-feigned astonishment.

"Know, then," cried de St. Hubert, lowering his voice, "that Charles IX. will be here ere the day dawns."

"Eh!"

"The sober truth, my lord; and harkee, ere to-morrow's sun gilds the Eastern sky, Navarre and his army will be corpses on the plain some five leagues from hence, and the Château de Mautrepale will be a dismantled chaos of smoking cinders. Art with us in the venture?"

"Hand and glove! I have a band at my back—small, I admit, but a score all told; yet, if hate and good swordmanship count in the world, no mean foes with which to cope. At dawn, sayest thou? Knowest thou that it lacks but two hours to that?"

"Aye!" replied the other, "I know. Charles is late, yet we do not start till an hour hence, so there is yet time."

"There is yet time!" murmured de Maurville with feverish impatience. Then turning to Yvonne, continued, softly, "The world were well rid of traitors, eh, sweetest? Good lack! but the sight of thy winsome face will nerve

me to meet my King. Ha! what's that?" he cried, starting guiltily as the trampling of many horses and heavy-booted feet rang out clearly on the still night air from the courtyard below.

"Charles IX. at last!" cried de St. Hubert, gladly, as drawing his sword he rushed to the casement and flung it open.

"Aye, the King!" echoed de Maurville, grimly, drawing his sword also, but not going to the window.

"Splendid! grand!" murmured de St. Hubert, ecstatically, as looking out of the casement he watched with interest the movements of the mailed figures below.

"Ha, Charles has dismounted!" cried de St. Hubert. "He enters the portal of the stairway which leads up here. Strange! I never knew he looked so tall. Ha! and a brawny noble follows. Who is't, I wonder? The Comte de Vilnet, I expect. This is a proud day for me, thus to surrender the key of Navarre to Charles! Hey! a blow struck with a partisan—one of my own men down—curse it, what means this? Swords drawn. Holy saints, they fight! Men are surging through the portcullis; they have lighted torches. What means all this?" He paused, glancing fearfully at the lurid glare around, whilst amid the clash of arms, rose the triumphant shout of "*Navarre!*" "*Navarre!*" shouted de St. Hubert, hoarsely, "trapped, trapped—de Maurville, we are trapped—curses—they are swarming up the staircase. They will fire the castle. Bar the door!" he shouted, as slamming the casement to, he turned towards the doorway, recoiling the next instant, as he beheld a tall, orange-clad figure, helmet and corseletless, standing as silent as a spectre, bending his long flashing blade to and fro between his mailed gloves, whilst behind him stood a grim, mailed figure, which he had no difficulty in recognising as the Marquis de la Orflevre.

"Navarre!" hissed de St. Hubert.

"Aye, renegade, the man whom thou once didst dub thy King! Come, traitor, defend thyself."

He stepped forward a pace, till his further passage was barred by the person of de Maurville.

"Halt, Sire!" he cried, sternly, "I claim thy life. I obeyed thy mandate in delivering the Château de St. Hubert into thy hands, but, Heaven be my witness, I will debar thee from all else."

"Hubert, thou'rt mad. Out of the way!"

"Nay, I stay here. I am mad. Aye, at the loss of love, at the loss of honour! I have tricked my host under the cloak of friendship. 'Twas for the King I stooped to a device damnable alike in the eyes of God and man! I will now protect him against thee—against the hosts of Navarre. 'Tis for St. Hubert that my cry now is."

"Fool—out of the way!" cried Henri, angrily, darting a furious glance at de St. Hubert, who was too astounded at his friend's treachery to know how to act.

"Wilt goad me on to commit regicide?" cried de Maurville, passionately.

"Out of the way!" shouted Navarre, crimson with passion, raising his sword. "Help, Marquis. Cut down that traitor, de St. Hubert! Beware of that girl, Marquis. Gare that axe!"

Too late, for Yvonne, with a courage born of despair, had crept behind the Marquis, and swinging a ponderous axe in the air, had sent it crashing through helm and head ere the unhappy de la Orfèvre had time to realise his peril; then she, shuddering at the sight of blood, shrunk away.

"Well hit!" cried de Maurville, catching the descending blade of Navarre.

"Traitor, I give thee one more chance for life!" hissed Navarre with his clenched teeth, pressing de Maurville closely with the point of his sword. "Wilt let me pass?"

"Never!"

A swift pass, a swifter parry, a lightning-like thrust, and de Maurville fell pierced to the heart, while Henri, with a woman's shriek ringing in his ears, leaped like a tiger at his dazed prey.

Like two hungry panthers they glanced at one another, each waiting for his opponent to attack, till Henri,

wearying, made a rapid thrust, which was deftly parried by his wary antagonist, and the blow repaid with such deadly swiftness that Navarre had his hands full to escape with only a slight flesh wound.

Stung to fury by the smart, Henri pressed his antagonist backwards inch by inch till the casement was reached; then the fight entered upon its most desperate phase. Pass, parry, thrust, and guard succeeded each other with lightning-like rapidity, till at last de St. Hubert by a lucky stroke sent Navarre's blade whirling across the room.

Navarre retreated in haste, de St. Hubert following till he suddenly paused with a cry of anguish, and, flinging his weapon away, ran to where de Maurville lay, just as Navarre's victorious men poured into the room to the rescue of their chief.

"Navarre is saved!" cried the Navarrese king, raising de St. Hubert's sword above his head, "and Charles's move checkmated."

A low moan of anguish caused Henri to glance in the direction of the corpse of de Maurville, an exclamation of surprise escaping his parted lips, as he beheld de St. Hubert kneeling on the ground, supporting the head and shoulders of a girl on one knee.

"Ha! sirrah, do you surrender?" he cried, striding to where de St. Hubert knelt.

"Surrender!" echoed the other, dully, "surrender? No, murderer of my daughter—never! Curses light on thee and thine for ever more!"

He rose to his feet, and, all unarmed as he was, sprang at Henri's throat, which he gripped with a maniac's strength. Twice the King's dagger rose in the air, and twice was his dagger sheathed in his antagonist's side, before he could shake his opponent off, who, with his hand pressed to his side, staggered across the room cursing Navarre, till the Duc de Mautrepale silenced him for ever.

Henri looked sadly at the dead, then muttered:

"I would fain that Fate had left me de la Orfèvre and de Maurville!" Then, stooping down, he glanced at the

pale features of Yvonne, who lay stretched across de Maurville, her dark chestnut hair stained crimson and rapidly matting from the blood which slowly welled from a deep cut on her left temple. "A cut on the temple!" he muttered; "I wonder how it came? A chance slash of mine, I expect. Poor child! I remember well de Maurville saying how he loved the daughter of the traitor. She is very beautiful," he added musingly, reverently doffing his hat—"too tender, too fragile a girl to witness scenes like this, too beautiful to die thus; yet, if she loved him as he loved her 'tis better so. Old comrades in arms!" he cried, huskily, addressing the corpses of de Maurville and de la Orflevre, "farewell! Hubert, my valued friend, I bade thee do too much; I see it now that 'tis too late. And thou, fair maiden," he added, dropping one knee and raising her rapidly icing hand to his lips, "forgive me! I doubt if one of mine, were I as hard pressed as thy father was, would have done as much as thou." Then, rising, he turned to his men, who stood waiting at the door, exclaiming:

"Friends, let us go hence gently. Uncover, comrades, for this place is sacred!"

TRISTRAM K. MONKE.

Trouble in Dahomey.

AN expedition sent out by our Gallic rivals, who are ever busy extending their influence into the mysterious hinterland with one eye on Algiers and the other on the Bight of Benin, lay camped one night in a deserted village in the forests of Dahomey. Sturdy Mahomedan Senegalis, wiry, broad-shouldered fellows ebony black in colour, lounged about the doors of the mud-walled huts around the big "palaver square," while a few tall Haussas from the north, who consider themselves superior to any coastwise tribe, lay apart beside their smouldering fires of aromatic wood.

A fringe of feathery oil palms surrounded the village like a wall, their fronds rising blackly against the indigo above, and behind them stretched the limitless forest. The square lay sharp and clear in the moonlight, which sparkled upon the piled arms, while inky shadows crept across the hard-trodden earth as the bright crescent sank slowly westwards. At intervals the call of a sentry rang out through the steamy darkness, or a palm-branch rattled drily in the fitful breeze; but there was no other sound to break the stillness, for the troops were worn out with their long march through the heat of the tropical forest.

Inside the deserted, basket-work hut of a headman, three Europeans were seated on ammunition boxes, the light of a smoky lamp falling on their lined faces and dingy uniforms, while a few canned provisions and the inevitable claret and Sauerbrunner lay on a board before them. Captain Lucien Oger, in command, leaned wearily back against the woven palm fibre, shivering with fever in spite of the heat, while his two companions, Lieutenant Marsaut and a certain M. Girardi, a haggard Algerian with the unmistakable stamp of the coast upon him, gazed silently out through the doorway.

There were few whitemen who knew as much about the Dahomey forest and its savage inhabitants as the latter, who had long traded with the natives far beyond the safety of the coast settlements, and, by means only known to himself, had so far escaped spear thrust and poison. Now he accompanied the expedition as guide and adviser.

All seemed too listless to speak, for the energy and spirits of a European melt away before the heat and steam of the African bush ; but presently Captain Oger, said, languidly, " Strange, we have no news from Fonset yet. He should have heard all these rumours of a rising before we did—yet he has sent no message. You know more about the bushmen than anyone else, Girardi. Do you think there is any truth in the traders' stories ? "

The Algerian smiled grimly, as he answered, " Truth enough, but the bushmen will not march upon the coast. They have an old feud to settle, and if the authorities had let well alone it would only have been the usual village burning. Now they will rise against this interference, and we shall have a bad time. One hundred and twenty men are not enough if you would force peace upon them "

" So," said the Officer ; " but France cannot allow the wholesale murder of a tribe under the protection of her flag. And now there is much to do, and I am very sick. "

A few minutes later, the ringing report of a rifle echoed from palm to palm ; there was a rush of feet towards the piled arms, and Lieutenant Marsaut dashed out of the hut, drawing his revolver as he ran. Captain Oger rose stiffly to his feet, but the Algerian said, quietly :

" A false alarm ; there is little danger of the bushmen attacking at night—only the sentry scared. "

" It is to be understood," answered Captain Oger. " Two of his comrades were found by the relief thrust through with a spear. Here they come—another Senegali killed ! "

Then the voice of Lieutenant Marsaut rose from the centre of the square :

" Back to your huts, and sleep, my children ! "

And the wondering troops re-piled their arms and fell apart as the guard advanced, half-carrying a man in the uniform of the Senegalis.

When they reached the house the stranger shook himself loose, and raising his hand in salute stood swaying feebly to and fro, with the light of the flickering lamp full upon him.

Lieutenant Marsaut started back in surprise, for the man was a ghastly sight. A tattered tunic hung in ribands from his shoulders, and there was blood, as well as the caked mud of the swamps, upon the rags, while the naked flesh beneath was lacerated by stabbing thorns, and his face was drawn and set like that of a dying man. Twice he uttered something in an unknown tongue, and then collapsed, a limp heap, upon the ground.

"One of Fonset's men. Give him wine—a little. He has much to tell," said the Captain.

Lieutenant Marsaut, kneeling down, raised the woolly head upon his knee, and forcing apart the strong white teeth poured a little wine down the negro's throat. Presently he opened his eyes and gazed wildly around, then stammered out a few incoherent sentences, while while the Captain gnawed his moustache.

"It is foolish talk; he does not speak French nor good Senegalese. Hear what he would say, Girardi," said the latter.

Then the Algerian, leaning forward to catch the confused utterance, translated:

"The Lieutenant man was sick of the fever when the bushmen rose, and his word was, 'Carry me to the coast, that the troops may know.' So we marched south through the forest, the whiteman lying sick to death in his hammock, and then, as we passed through the narrow bush trails the heathen fell upon us. My comrades made a good fight that day, and the officer man he leaned against a palm in the midst of the smoke, and his words were, always '*Courage! mes enfants.*' Then there was a rush of the bushmen, and the Senegalis fell, the whiteman among them, and I fled fast through the

forest with neither food nor rest, for the order was—carry the word to the coast.”

“You have done well, Sergeant—take him away,” said the Captain. Then he turned to his companions, adding quietly, “Poor Fonset, he died as became an officer of France, and there shall be a reckoning for his blood. And now sleep, for we march at dawn.”

A few days later the troops wound in and out among the oil palms, wading knee-deep in clusters of white lilies and crimson spike flowers, which gave up their heavy fragrance as the soldiers trod them down. Then one came running from the head of the company, and when he told his tale his speech was thick like that of a drunken man.

At the word, “Halt!” the tired troops came to a standstill and the three Europeans followed the wounded Senegali, until the man beckoned with his hand and pushing aside a screen of creepers Captain Oger moved softly forward, as one who dreads to see that which he expects.

Among the torn creepers and trampled undergrowth, the uniforms of a handful of Senegalis lay half-hidden by the bush vegetation, though here and there a metal button or bayonet socket flashed like a star in the sunlight. Following their guide, the officers pressed on until they halted beside a tiny rill of water trickling through the sand. There, with one arm folded under his head and the other thrown forward, a bunch of plume grass clenched in his stiffened fingers, the Lieutenant lay, for his struggle against plague and pestilence in the lonely African bush was over at last.

Captain Oger lifted his sun-helmet, and, bending reverently down, said, “I salute you, comrade Fonset, soldier of France.” And his companions bent their heads.

“See, the story is written plain. They carried off their dead—doubtless there were many—and left him in peace. There is no wound and he died of the fever,” said the Algerian, pointing to the sand-sprinkled tunic and the trail of bent grasses leading from the spring

towards the palm, whose rough trunk was scarred with splintered patches of lighter colour.

An hour afterwards the whitemen stood bare-headed beside a shallow trench, with the troops ranged behind them in long lines of blue and ebony, their weapons flashing in the sunlight. Two Senegalis stepped forward to remove the folds of the tricolour from that which lay beneath, but the Captain raised his hand, saying, "Let it stay; he served the flag with honor and he shall sleep beneath it now!" Then he crumbled a little mould through his fingers and the Krooboy carriers turned back the sand with their matchet blades. A word of command rose sharply on the listless air, the chassepots came home to the shoulders with a rattle, and a crashing volley wakened all the echoes of the forest. Whirling wreaths of smoke blotted out the group of perspiring Krooboys and the half-filled trench: then the troops swung into sections of fours and marched into the shadow of the palms. The tread of marching feet grew fainter and fainter, and the officer of France was left alone in the silent forest, sleeping his last sleep with the hot earth pressing down his weary eyes.

A week later, the troops dragged themselves heavily along through a tract of more-open bush. It was as usual in the middle of the dry season, fiercely hot, and there was not a breath of air to stir the palm fronds, which hung limp and motionless overhead, while the cottonwood foliage had paled in its glossy green, and every leaf drooped feebly on its stem. Festoons of shrivelled creepers rustled drily as the soldiers passed, and what had been rotting mud by the swampy creeks lay baked into the semblance of concrete slabs, shrunken and fissured with cracks of unknown depth.

As the troops stumbled slowly and painfully forward, worn out, and disheartened by sickness, forced marches, and midnight alarms, there was no sound of bird or beast to break the stillness, for every living thing lay still, and a deep silence brooded heavily over lofty cottonwood and feathery palm. The Algerian, however, seemed strangely uneasy.

"There is a native town not far off," he said. "Scouts have followed our march for days, and all the tribes between the rivers are armed. There is hard fighting before us."

"The harder the better," answered the leader, as the scene beside the spring rose before him in all its ghastly detail.

Presently they entered an open waste of plume grass. What had been rippling waves of lush grass now stood like rows of yellow metal tubes, the flinty stems hard and polished, while the sword-like blades crackled to the touch. Coming out from the shade of the forest, the glare was blinding, for the yellow sea flashed back the fierce sunlight, while the temperature among the tall stems was almost unendurable. For a moment the foremost section slackened its pace. More than once the men had seen a comrade drop his rifle with a clatter, and fall bleeding at their feet, shot from ambush by a skulking assassin, and that grass might be full of naked bushmen, lurking flintlock gun in hand, and they had no desire to be struck down by an unseen foe.

"Forward there, Senegalis," said the sickly Captain, and reluctantly they entered the narrow trail, the withered plumes filling their eyes with yellow dust, and the saw-edged blades slashing tunic and flesh as they passed.

At last the grass was left behind, and a clearing filled with maize, broad-leaved bananas and cassava, lay in front, where many rows of "swish" huts nestled beneath the palms, and as the line of uniforms came rustling out of the thicket, a beating of monkey-skin drums, and the firing of gaspipe guns rose on the listless air.

"Halt! fix bayonets," said the Captain, and as the troops came to a standstill he stood shaking with fever, while the perspiration streamed down his face, gazing at the black figures which swarmed like bees among the huts.

"Look well to your rear," said the Algerian; the order came sharply, "March!" and as the soldiers hurried across the clearing a crackle of red fire blazed from hut to hut; then, amid the hammering of flintlock guns, a

shower of broken cast-iron pot went singing through the forest. The flank man dropped his chassepot, and with his chest shattered by the murderous charge from a long Dane gun, went down headforemost among the maize, where he lay writhing and tearing up handfuls of the harsh leaves, while the Algerian cast anxious glances over his shoulder at the forest behind.

Then, at the order, "Fire!" there was a simultaneous crash, and the front of the line was rolled in smoke; but the downward drag of muzzle and bayonet was too much for hasty aim and tired arms, and half the lead tore up the ground fifty yards ahead, while the rest whirled harmlessly over the huts.

"Charge them with the bayonet—forward, my children!" shouted the Captain; the slide-bolts clicked as they flung out the empty shells; but there was no response, and a fresh burst of riflery drowned his voice as sword in hand he staggered forward through the smoke.

Though a wretched marksman, the West African is desperately fond of firearms, and if a black soldier ever gets out of hand, which is by no means uncommon, he will fire every round of ammunition harmlessly away, after which he takes to the bayonet, and, if well led, is to be avoided.

So the three Europeans, in imminent danger of being shot, ran along the line, beating down the muzzles until the firing ceased, and with renewed spirits the troops went forward. Then a wild yell rang out above the din, and through the acrid vapour came a rush of naked negroes armed with bright matchets and barbed-edged spears, having thrown down their firearms before the charge. On they came, swarming through the yellow maize and glossy banana leaves, half-hidden by verdant foliage and drifting smoke.

"Close order—fire a volley—steady, my children!" shouted Captain Oger, and started at the sound of his own voice, it seemed so hollow and strained; but the troops needed no telling with swift death rolling towards them upon that maze of glittering blades. The files locked together, an irregular volley rang out; and ripen-

ing maize, and human flesh and blood, went down before the short-range hail of lead.

There was a confused shouting of unheeded orders, and the Officer stood gasping for breath after vain attempts to make himself heard ; for the men were firing as fast as they could thrust the cartridges into the hot chamber, and at point-blank range the front of the foe crumpled up before them.

At last, as he gazed through the eddying smoke, the sound the Algerian expected fell upon his ear, and he turned eagerly to Oger, saying :

“Get them into square---for your life !”

The rifle barrels burned the fingers of the soldiers ; so far, no foe had crossed steel with them, and their blood was stirred ; so, following the sharp command, they swung into square, trampling the life out of many of the wounded foe as they wheeled. Just in time ; for through the grass and out of the forest poured a fresh horde of assailants, firing their gaspipe guns aimlessly as they came, and the whitemen set their teeth while they gazed.

The tall plume grass lay around two sides of the square, a space of soil covered with the trailing tendrils of yams intervening. Their first mad impulse over, the troops were now amenable to discipline, and waited in grim silence with rifles at the ready, while the Krooboy carriers sat panting in the centre of the square beside the opened cases of ammunition.

“Remember your comrades beside the spring,” said the Captain,” and his Subaltern glanced at him in surprise, for there was no trace of weakness or fever now in the ringing voice and erect figure. Girardi, however, was not astonished; he had seen men dying from fever do strange things under the influence of excitement.

So they waited, finger on trigger, while a mass of wild figures swept nearer and nearer across the clearing; then the grass rustled and swayed before a rush of the foe, and again the order, “Fire !” rang out. A train of red sparks, bright flashes of flame, and eddying wreaths of smoke rolled along two sides of the square, and the front of the advance melted away, while the

ground was strewn with writhing figures, splintered spears and gleaming matchets. But the bushman, whatever may be his faults, is no coward, and with desperate bravery the naked foe came on.

A moment later, spear-head and matchet-blade rattled upon the barrels of the chassepots, while the bayonets gleamed and flickered in the sunrays as the men lunged, thrust and panted. A stirred-up cloud of dust rose from dry earth and parched grass tassels, mingling with the low-lying smoke, and from out of this haze came screams, curses, the clash of arms, and the thud of falling bodies. Grinding their teeth, the rear rank men fired over the shoulders of those in front, so close that the flash from muzzle scorched their comrades' cheek, while the line surged and swayed like the folds of a crawling snake.

But short machet and light spear are no match for the deadly reach of the bayonet, and presently the foe drew back into cover and wounded men crawled out from among their comrades' feet crying for water, while outside the line of steel lay five limp objects in the uniform of France.

The young Lieutenant glanced at them for a moment ; then he turned his head aside, for that narrow strip of red shambles was not a sight to dwell upon, though the un-drilled savage had little cause to be ashamed of the story written there.

So, for a while, there was breathing space; and the three whitemen, with smoke grime and powder grains blackening their perspiring faces, waited for what might happen next.

Then—whether lighted purposely or fired by a smouldering wad, no one ever knew—an eddying sheet of flame roared aloft from the dry grass, and a wave of heat and stifling smoke blew in the faces of the men. Instinctively they shuffled backwards, crowding the two flanks as they did so, and a choking shout, "Stand fast—the bushmen come!" rose from a corner. Next moment the square reeled as though struck by a battering-ram, and the foe piled themselves upon the jammed ranks. One side bulged inwards before the overwhelming

pressure ; there was a swinging of matchets, a shimmer of spears, and as the Europeans dashed towards the threatened spot, the ranks burst apart and a black wedge cleft its way through. In a moment the space inside was filled with naked figures ; the rearward ranks on either side faced inwards with the bayonet, but the mad rush swept them aside and the square split in two.

Throwing himself into the centre of a closing ring of steel, Lieutenant Marsaut caught his leader in his arms as the latter, dropping his hot revolver, lurched forward, crying feebly, "I am shot."

Then a blinding wreath of black smoke enveloped them, and with the roar of the blazing grass in their ears, the men stumbled half-dazed forwards—they knew not where—thrusting and stabbing as they went, while two Krooboys staggered blindly along, carrying the wounded officer in a hammock. After a few moments, which seemed hours, the smoke drove aside and the Lieutenant found himself again on the fringe of the forest, while across a sea of fire and smoke groups of the tribesmen sullenly fired harmless showers of potley after them. Away to the left there was a sound of steady firing and yells of rage, which told that those of their comrades cut off from them were holding their own.

Hearing a faint voice calling him, the Lieutenant strode up to the lurching hammock, and in answer to a question said, "At least eight of our men killed and most of the rest are badly cut. Girardi and some of them have gone North and seem to be holding back the foe."

"Good," said the Captain, faintly ; "the Algerian will come off. If he cannot fight the bushmen he can trick them into a truce; he knows these people and will march towards the Quarra. If we turn, we lose every man ; back now to the coast."

The troops will long remember that march. The foe had evidently had enough and attempted no pursuit, so day after day they struggled south through the forests, weary and wounded. For long periods they suffered from hunger and thirst, for the villages were burned before them, neither was there any man to sell them

food ; while occasionally, after quenching their thirst at a well, the men were seized with griping pains, and some fell by the wayside to rise no more. The line of their march, like that of many other West African expeditions, was marked by cast off burdens, discarded weapons, and mounds of freshly broken soil. Still, through burning noonday heat and clammy midnight mist, they held steadily south, while with glittering eyes and blackened lips Captain Oger lay back in his hammock, babbling foolishly in the fever delirium.

At length they reached the broad lagoons by Porto Novo, and ragged and tattered, daubed with river mud and powdered with dust, marched into quarters with fixed bayonets.

In due time Captain Oger recovered, and was sent up country with another expedition, for there is always trouble in the Dahomey hinterland, and France lavishes both blood and gold in her attempts to maintain a foothold in that savage region of human sacrifice and ceaseless forest warfare. The Algerian, Girardi, eventually arrived, *via* the Yoruba country and the Niger, with the loss of very few of the men who followed him, having traversed a region into which white men have seldom ventured, but his adventures as related in Porto Novo would fill a book of themselves. The story of the expedition is set down in the French records in a few brief paragraphs, so that he who runs may read, for both the Gallic and British authorities are very chary of allowing details of their small forest campaigns to leak out. Things are of necessity done by both sides in the wild hinterland which are not quite in accordance with civilised ideas, and a discreet silence is better on the whole. On the coast, however, when their foot is on their native heath, fever-stricken officers occasionally tell stories which are very remarkable, if true, though there are few things too ghastly or grotesque to happen in Africa.

HAROLD BINDLOSS.

The Picture Shows.

A CHANGE has certainly come over the Academy. There have been signs of it for some time. The show is becoming less and less an exhibition of pictures painted after the Academy method, and more and more an exhibition of pictures of the year. Up to the limits of space everything seems to have gone in. An artist paints an excellent portrait of a side-board (there are also a woman and a baby in the background, but they really do not count), and it gets, if not a place on the line, at least one very near it. The academicians themselves have exercised much more sparingly than usual their claims on the walls. Few indeed have sent in their full number of canvases, and some, if judged on the carpenter's plan by square feet of area, send next to nothing. The result is just over a thousand oil paintings of all styles and all merits. Never was there so catholic an exhibition. Here and there, indeed, there seems something like a trace of malice in the way in which a sober, well-executed and carefully finished piece of work, strong in the sense of its completeness and attainment, is hung immediately next to a more than usually striking example of *ad captandum* crudity, or wilfully assumed conventionality. It may be the leaven of the old spirit still working within the walls of Burlington House; it looks like a last silent appeal to an (artistically) uneducated and inexpert public in favour of a judgment in artistic matters, which if indeed itself conventional at least made for sanity, soberness, and self-restraint—in fact, the inherited prejudices of an aristocrat, as against those assumed and flaunted in the face of the world by the *parvenu*—often enough the *parvenu* of genius—to cover his inability to attain. But the broad stream of unarranged canvases provides a

somewhat bewilderingly chaotic mass of material from which to diagnose and disentangle the general trend of artistic progress in the past year.

Of a truth there is much that is good, more that is merely commonplace, and no small amount that is bad—sometimes even bad with a string of emphasising adverbs. While the honours list, so to say, is deplorably weak, there is an unusually high average of good work in the general. Disappointing to the mere sightseer, the exhibition is full of promise for the future progress of English art. The undistinguished ruck of those who, having done well, have yet not attained honours—that is to say, whose names are unmentioned in the conversation of country parsons or young ladies in the drawing room—indicates, according to the *criteria* accepted of our masters, just that prevalence of average excellence from which, sooner or later, there must emerge something really great. Meanwhile, it is more than a little puzzling. The earnest person, proceeding to go through the exhibition canvas by canvas, in his stolid way from Gallery I., No. 1 onwards, gets almost immediately the impression of plenty of excellent work, and jumps at once to the conclusion of a really good show. By-and-bye, he notices that the expected masterpiece seems long in coming, and by the time that he is half through the galleries he realises that the pictures he remembers for their merits may be counted on the fingers of his hands. It is not that there is none worth remembrance, but that in the general crowd it is so difficult to distinguish.

It was remarked by the politician of a treatise on the integral calculus that it might be all very true, but that it was not practical in that it did not in the least assist him to ideas in addressing his constituents. The first duty of a critic who desires to earn his salt is to point out the Picture of the Year, that the parson and the young lady may be able to go and look at it, admire its beauties, and talk about it afterwards. Or, in adverse circumstances, the young lady may even talk about it without the preliminary ceremony of seeing it. Until he has done that, the critic has done naught. After he has done it, he may

go on to say what he chooses ; but outside the circles where these things are taken seriously, like Signior Benedick no one marks him. And inside those circles the value and correctness of the criticism is estimated by the amount of its agreement with the views of the particular circle. Be it so, then, and let us get to business, which happens in this case to be the conveying in words of what words are essentially unable to convey—namely, any idea of the appearance and qualities of a picture. That is what is called being practical.

To begin with, then, it may be said at once that *the* picture will hardly be Mr. Solomon's "On the Threshold of the City" (625). This is a memorial of a unique event, and an occasion which the representatives of the City might almost without shame have failed to adequately meet. Moreover, it occupies a first-class position, from an artistic point of view is full of excellent work—how excellent it takes a detailed inspection to discover—and difficult as the problem must have been, the effect of both the composition and the colour scheme is graceful and harmonious, and the whole result a beautiful one. But — it is the picture of a very fine horse, or rather the head and forequarters of horse and of a gilded mace. When one looks at Sir George Faudel-Phillips, he is seen to appear just as he did on Jubilee Day, and most of the other portraits are not unhappy. But one has to look ; the general effect is that the municipal dignitaries are at best accessories, and at worst mere background. Nevertheless, remembering the enormous difficulty of dealing with the number of figures and the masses of strong colour, it is not so much wonderful that the artist has failed in producing something that is wholly satisfactory as that he has so nearly succeeded.

The jubilee is the end of the City Corporation's history book ; William the Conqueror is near the beginning. Again, it must be said of Mr. Seymour Lucas's large work, which is intended for one of the panels of the Royal Exchange, that the result is not absolutely happy. The strong, hard face is there of the man in whose veins the blood of Odin was mingled with that of the tanner

of Falaise, the only man who ever mastered the English race, and whose mastery taught them, once and for all, that, quarrel as they might among themselves, never again must they be conquered by a foreign prince. But there is no reason to suppose that when William the King greeted William the Bishop and Godfrey the Portreeve friendly, he was deadly tired and half asleep. It may be that this is intended to represent Norman scorn. If William really felt it, which is not probable, he was much too good a statesman to have shown it, and in any event the suggestion is hardly complimentary to the City. In the queen it may pass. The justification from the studio point of view of the obtrusive white column on the right may be left to be debated in the studios—the ordinary man will say, Away with it; why cumbereth it the ground? |

Turning then to yet a third style, there can be little doubt that, in spite of its mannerism, the picture of the exhibition will be found in Mr. Abbey's "Cordelia," or, as he prefers to call it, "King Lear" (138)—of the old king only the back is visible. It is a somewhat gorgeous affair, with the sheen of satin and glitter of gems, and absolutely unlike the way in which the situation in the first scene of the play would or could be presented on any stage. The picture is a distinct advance upon the artist's "Hamlet," in which, as in the case of King Lear, there is considerable latitude allowable in the choice of period and accessories. It is less certain whether it will hold a place before Mr. Abbey's "Courtship of the Lady Anne," or whether in this case again the straiter limitations have not brought about an artistically superior result. When all has been said, the "Cordelia," remains a splendid picture. No. 234, by the same artist, with a less emotional subject and in a more restrained style, should not be overlooked.

But if Mr. Abbey—who is, before all things, a great artist—in saturating himself with the spirit, circumstances, and detail of the Middle Ages, has insensibly acquired some of the mannerisms of the missal painter, what is to be said of the gentlemen, without one-tenth of his genius,

who, dealing with no period at all and no story in particular, choose to indulge in miscellaneous collections—one cannot term them groupings—of underbred womenkind, posed in what Alice called Anglo-Saxon attitudes, and all arrayed in ill-cut garments of most gorgeously coloured silks? About the best of this school is Mr. Byam Shaw. When a picture represents nothing in particular, it may pass if it is pretty (the word fits—to put it higher would be wrong). Mr. Byam Shaw's picture this year (342) does appear to represent something, and the suggestion is hardly pleasing. Moreover, the allegory, if it be an allegory, seems upside down. The alternative would appear to be to regard all this kind of work as mere decoration, in which case its unreality need not trouble. But then, however excellent of its kind, its proper place must be very low in the hierarchy of art. It is difficult to take it seriously—possibly it is never intended that we should. Of the ideal Middle Ages of romance, as apart from Mr. Abbey's, which are the real article, a picture of the sane and sensible school may be found in Mr. G. Boughton's "Road to Camelot" (216). It is, perhaps, somewhat dry and chalky, unless the east wind blew in the spring in those days that never were (as it certainly does now), and the red cloaks of the market-girls have been weather-stained down to a nameless colour that is neither pink nor brown, else they must infallibly have killed the crimson of the page. One can put any kinds of colour together in a poem; in a picture there are—or, at least, there used to be—some kind of limitations to be observed.

The President's "Skirt Dance" (222) belongs to the old civilisation, not the new. The pose of the dancer, in her salmon-coloured robe of Coan texture, may be questioned by those who do not allow for the difference due to stone floors and unshod feet. No one will deny the splendour of the circular sweep of marble benches, or the harmonious beauty of the *tout ensemble*. Enormous care appears to have been taken to ensure accuracy in detail, yet, even for the most skilful, so hard is it only not to stumble, that some of the roses appear to have a sus-

picious resemblance to modern hothouse varieties which were certainly not known in the days of Horace. Rose-wreaths of some sort had to be painted, but there seems less excuse for the gratuitous introduction, by another artist, of anachronistic geraniums into a period picture of another date. It would have been quite as easy to choose a possible flower, and more correct to have had none there at all. With Sir E. Poynter it is natural to compare Mr. Alma-Tadema, whose only picture happens to be in the same room. Mr. Alma-Tadema is usually frankly pagan, and with little or no story to tell. His "Conversion of Paula" (286) is, of course, excellent with the artist's peculiar excellences; but it is doubtful whether he has effected any improvement by going outside the usual range of his choice of subjects.

A picture that will deserve and secure a very large amount of earnest attention is Mr. Briton Riviere's "The Temptation" (22). The wilderness is not, apparently, the Syrian Desert, but some rock plateau of the south in the wilderness of the Wandering. The principal—indeed, the only—figure is seated with the head bowed forward. There is no nimbus or other miraculous appendage, and the idealisation is only just so much as is necessary for a reverent treatment of the subject. But over His head gleams the morning star, while the east is orange with the coming dawn. The terrors of the solitude and despair have never been rendered with less machinery or more rigid reserve. The picture is almost as remarkable for what is refrained from as for what is done.

These make a manageable list for the use of the young lady in the intervals of dinner or between the dances. To return to other matters, perhaps the most important thing in the exhibition is the culmination of Mr. La Thangue. Those who have watched his emergence and been grateful to him as a painter of the labouring men and women as they are with knowledge, sympathy, and absolute regard for truth, even if it be a harsh truth, will receive with joy his "Cider Press" (929). Of the four arms straight on the lever (as they would be), of the man and woman's face, both weather-tanned to the same shade

(as they would be), of the whole attitude of the picture a critic said mockingly, that it might have been got with a kodak. If that means merely that it is true to life, why not? Should the woman push crookedly for artistic effect? But no kodak nor the best lens and plate that were ever turned out of photographer's shop could get those wonderful lights and shadows any more than could the school-taught artist, who paints the conventional "peasant" a being to be regarded as perhaps a little above the lay figure, but certainly much beneath the model, and distributes lights and shades, not where they are found in nature, but where they happen to be wanted to "throw up" this, or "harmonise" that. Confident, however, of mastery where no one else dare venture Mr. La Thangue sometimes attempts more than is possible. He is not so completely successful, for instance, in 123—that is, one could almost wish the dappled spots away altogether; and his large picture (608) looks comparatively dull, for the simple reason that what is a sharp contrast when brought within a few inches, ceases to be so when spread over some feet. The same artist's "Nightfall" (29), with a similar atmosphere, but upon a smaller scale, is very much more satisfactory. Whatever he may go on to do in the future, there can be no doubt that Mr. Thangue's work will exercise a most healthful influence on the future of English art. He has slain, at least, one convention utterly.

The Academy is always strong in portraits; it is exceptionally so this year. But from the point of pure æsthetics, portraits are unsatisfactory things. At best the painter has a divided duty—to produce a good likeness, and to make a fine picture; sometimes there is even a third. Therefore it needs to say little. Mr. Sargent's portrait of Mr. Wertheimer (603) will, of course, arrest everyone. Never before, perhaps, has Mr. Sargent allowed his method of treatment to carry him so far. The criticism of it and the picture are alike obvious. Though hardly fair to the French schools, a comparison of our English portrait painters' work with the pictures of M. Benjamin Constant (510), and M. Carolus Duran (484, 493),

is, nevertheless, instructive. Only one would so like to know what, for instance, the painter of Earl Beauchamp and the painter of Sir George Taubman-Goldie (567), really in their hearts think of each other's way. The presentation portrait of Mr. Herbert Spencer (601) is simply a failure, and the nation will go without a fitting memorial of our great philosopher. There were difficulties—to Mr. Spencer it is something almost like physical pain to sit for his portrait; but it is the business of a great artist to overcome difficulties that stop ordinary men. Better it had never been attempted.

Leaving portraits, it may be said that most of the well-approved favourites repeat themselves more or less mechanically. Few rise above their former level except, perhaps, Mr. Clausen (552), and certainly Mr. Somerscales. In "A Coming Squall" (959), we have a ship with her upper topsails and topgallant-sails both in the brails, and a short-handed merchant crew are securing the topsails first. There is already trouble with the fore-topgallant. The storm-cloud, with the wind underneath it that is coming up from the west, has blotted out all that is left of the light of the sun, and the whole illumination is from the still unclouded sky. The deep, strong suggestion of light, rather than light itself in the dark blue sea, is just that which is never seen except in deep water, and sometimes, though rarely, in the evening sky of spring. A mere landsman may not appreciate the whole truth of the picture, but the suggestion of wind and wet freshness can hardly be missed.

For the rest it is, on the whole, a red year. Mr. Herkomer has covered half a canvas with red in "The Guards' Cheer" (198). If it cannot be soldiers, then make it next with hunters. Mayors and judges also help. After the eye has been strained with the glare of garish reds, readjustment for more sober tones is a little difficult. Even a bishop in full canonicals (592), a noticeable thing enough in itself, stands hardly a chance. The school that paints all things flat and furry, like a photograph out of focus, and then covers the result with a coloured haze, is well represented. The Academy will

pass it if there is decent drawing behind the haze. At the end of Room IV. is an object lesson. A beautifully finished picture of nothing in particular by Mr. Leader (314) is hung with, on the right of it, Mr. Watts at his rustiest and most gigantesque; above is an example of the pretty colour school, only with this improvement, that the artist has at least sought an actual incident. Around—well, look at it and see how sobriety and finish and care stand out among the rest.

Thus much for the mass. To attempt to pick the merit out of it, or to say what there may be in Room IX., would be a hopeless task and shall not be tried. Mr. Val Prinsep's 10 is obviously an experiment. In 256 Mr. Ralph Peacock has attempted nothing very great, and of that two-thirds of the canvas might be cut away without hurt. But in what he has attempted he has succeeded thoroughly, which is much. In an era of violent colours and strained effort this sort of thing is a welcome change. Lady Butler's "Morrow of Talavera" (303), not very well placed, is in danger of getting overlooked, because it is small. Mr. Philip Burne-Jones has painted a small portrait of Sir Edward (790). Mr. Farquharson's 388, effective but, truth to say, somewhat easy, should be compared with what Mr. Peter Graham has dared attack in 420 on the wall opposite. Why 953 is where it is, one may inquire. Sir Harry Johnston's picture (977) will be pretty severely handled; but it is not everyone who will condemn it that is a competent critic of a dead negro and aasvogels (of course, that is not the correct name for them so far north) under an African sun. Mr. Macbeth should not waste himself on such things as 644.

Compared with the wilderness of canvases at Burlington House, the three rooms of the New Gallery would be a manageable show to deal with were it not already the end of the article. Hence, everything must be of the briefest. No. 39 is useful in showing the completeness of Mr. Abbey's limitations. All the little garden pictures of Mr. Alfred Parsons should be studied and may be

compared with Mr. MacWhirter's "Valley of Flowers" (247). Then, in order to appreciate the difficulty and the skill, they should be contrasted with the average failure of those who are daring enough to attempt anything approaching the same kind of work. One need not give numbers; examples will be easily found. M. Adrien Demont has succeeded in painting a portrait of a rainbow (128), which is a thing all artists have failed at (Millais, who could do most things, notoriously). But to do it, he has sacrificed all the rest of the picture. There are two pictures by Sir Edward Burne-Jones (141 and 82) for those who have educated themselves into accepting the conventions of his school.

The main interest lies in the West Room, which is quite unlike the others. The attention is at once drawn to the range of portraits on the left, where Mr. Sargent and Mr. J. J. Shannon stand in juxtaposition to Mr. Byam Shaw (192) and the 207 of Mr. Arthur Melville. In 192, Miss Pyke-Nott looks as though she might have been cut out of paper and pasted up against the most flaring red and gold pattern in the paper-hanger's sample book. Judged by all accepted canons, it is an outrage, and yet it cannot be denied that, in its way, it succeeds. This sort of thing may be the beginning of a new art, but, in mercy to mere oil paintings, it should have a gallery to itself and not be visited on the same day with them. As it is, one would like to detach the tall, upright figure from that alarming wall, and try how it would look on some background against which the fresh young face would have some chance of being properly rendered. If Mr. Byam Shaw's colour rushes to the eye, it is equally impossible to escape from the black, white and grey streaks of the lady in the costume of the early sixties. The wherefore of it is an insoluble riddle. It must be seen to be believed; words simply fail. As to "The Beloved" (255) in the same room, all that criticism can say about it was said years ago, when Mr. Holman Hunt startled the world and shocked some of it with a picture that must now be sought in the north. But let everyone that looks at the head force himself to realise Whom and what it is

intended to represent. It will be a valuable mental tonic, at any rate. After all, in reckoning up, it will be found that the Gallery contains much good work, though it cannot even be indicated here, and less of the merely eccentric than usual. There is, of course, Mr. Walter Crane's procession in which Labour (Mr. Crane is always much concerned with Labour), Death, and other allegorical people prance before an unsympathising world (57). At least Britannia is let off this time and need not look on unless she chooses. One would think the going was bad over such a road. A recollection of something that used actually to happen in the streets of Cairo, is a reminder that the poet has omitted a most important shape from the list of the World's Conquerors. The picture puts one in an excellent state of mind to appreciate Mr. Lemon's "Mambrino's Helmet" (66).

The picture of the exhibition is, of course, the Hon. John Collier's "Lady Godiva" (246).

There are more of them—many more—but most of the readers of *BELGRAVIA*, when they have conscientiously assimilated the Academy and the New Gallery, consider they have done their duty by the art of the year.

"3 Require and Charge You Both."

CHAPTER I.

It was during a pleasant tour in Norfolk that the following strange story was told me. I must perforce disguise the names, but those who knew of the occurrence at the time—and despite the lapse of years some of those most vitally affected by it are still living—will have no difficulty in recognising it, and will, in the face of some statements recently made, understand why and at whose request I now make it public.

It was a glorious summer evening, and I was strolling in the pretty little inn garden with the village schoolmaster, whose acquaintance I had made on the banks of a neighbouring trout stream. Coplestone—that was his name—was just such a character that one meets with in the delightful pages of "Elia" or *The Tatler*, and being so he was an anachronism—and a very charming one. A perfect gentleman, and I fancy of good family, learned, simple, with old-fashioned prejudices, and quaint, courtly, old world manners, he was yet content to live in this remote arcadia, and I doubt not was, like one who must have been his double, "passing rich on forty pounds a year," or at all events very little more. There was, doubtless, a mystery, but what it was I never knew. Of one thing I felt quite certain, it could be nothing discreditable to him.

"What a wonderful bit of colour the sunset makes on that little ruin by the wood yonder," I remarked. "By the way, what is it?"

"It's the old chapel belonging to Strangeways Court; the house is behind the trees. The family were always married and buried there, but it has not been used for many years, not since——"

He stopped and gazed gravely over the darkening landscape to where the little ruin, catching the last rays of the setting sun, glowed with rosy brightness amidst the dark shadows of the trees. As we looked the gleam died away, and the grey stone grew cold and dreary. Coplestone shivered as if in sympathy, and looked away.

"Since when?" I asked, recalling his unfinished sentence.

"*Infandum jubes renovare dolorem*," he quoted with a grave smile and deprecating wave of his hand. "It is in good sooth a strange story, and sad as strange."

"Then stay and have supper with me; it will be a genuine kindness; the trout are as good as I've often seen; and afterwards you shall tell me the story."

After a little polite demur he consented, and what he told me I give in his own words,

In the year 18—, Sir George Strangeways was living alone at the Court, a widower, whose wife had been dead some two years. He was a solitary, because an unpopular man. People were by no means disposed to over-censoriousness in those days, and looked very indulgently on the "pleasant vices" of men and women, especially if they belonged to the *beau monde*, but Sir George's character was too bad even for that easy-going age. Even his associates, men who were themselves looked askance at by most, were repelled by the cold, cruel, selfishness he imported into his sensuality. Yet he was a handsome, and could be outwardly a fascinating and agreeable man, and consequently there was no surprise but a good deal of pity for the lady, when, five years earlier, it was announced he was going to marry. His bride was a Miss Dolores Trevenna, an orphan of great wealth, and who united in herself the ravishing beauty, and wild, passionate nature of the Spanish and Cornish races which mingled in her blood. The cynical wits of the club houses declared that it was a love match of the most ardent character—the lady idolising Sir George, and Sir George worshipping her money.

While the first glamour of possession held its sway,

everything went smoothly. Then there came rumours of dissension—Sir George was openly and coarsely unfaithful, Lady Strangeways furious and jealous. He made no secret that he was tired of his beautiful wife, but whenever matters seemed to be coming to a crisis he would trade upon her infatuated devotion for him, feign penitence and reformation, and make things quiet again. The money was hers, and till she had made a will in his favour a complete rupture would not have suited his interests. After two or three of these temporary broils there came a halcyon season of unwonted length. He was once more the tender lover of their courtship days, his whole object seemed to be to make her happy, and the loving, undisciplined heart of the girl—for she was little more—glowed and throbbed in the warmth of her new-found happiness, and all the more when the sweet hope came to her that presently there would be another link to bind husband and wife together, when to those names of love should be added those of father and mother to be lisped by baby lips. The services of the family lawyer were called into requisition, and similar wills were made by husband and wife, each leaving to the other a life interest in their separate property, the whole to go eventually to the unborn child, failing whom to the survivor of themselves. And then Sir George and Lady Strangeways left England for what would now be called a yachting cruise, on the advice, it was understood, of the physicians.

Five weeks later came tidings which excited universal horror. Sir George and Lady Strangeways, when visiting the Levant, had been decoyed ashore, and when their Captain—alarmed at their prolonged absence—sent a boat's crew to make enquiries, the honest sailors were horror-stricken to find the bodies of their employers almost stripped and denuded of everything of value, Lady Strangeways dead with a gaping gash across her throat, and Sir George seemingly in little better case, his face blackened and scorched, his hands and feet bound, though in his frantic struggles he had released the former, which were bruised and bleeding, and innumerable cuts on every

limb. His agony when, after some time, the skill of the surgeon restored him to consciousness, was described as heart-rending. The incident caused great excitement, and the ambassador displayed untiring energy; the British Government were angry and threatening, and the Greeks contrite and earnest in their disclaimers. But the assassins were never traced, and Sir George Strangeways returned home a gloomy, morose man, bereaved of wife and the hope of issue on which so much had been built, and—unquestioned possessor of the enormous Trevenna property and the unencumbered estates which passed with Strangeways Court.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Sir George revisited his clubs, it was seen that he was considerably changed. By no means, however, for the better. He was certainly no more cleanly a liver than before, but he had become sullen and reserved; the extravagant freehandedness, which had gained such questionable friends as he had, was a thing of the past; now that he was a really wealthy man, his whole idea seemed to be money-getting. He was too cautious to indulge in speculations, but it was an open secret that if the firm of Ruinsheimer & Co., the widely known and as widely hated sixty per cent. money-lenders, were forced to reveal the identity of the mystic "Co.," their dirty forefinger would inevitably point to Sir George Strangeways.

Time went on, and before the second year of his widowhood came the report that Sir George was about to marry again—the daughter of a Devonshire parson of good family. The first immediate consequence of this was a *fracas* at the club. A certain West Country nobleman of sporting renown—as popular a man as Strangeways was the reverse—came up to town and roundly declared the rumour was impossible, or, if Sir George Strangeways preferred it, an "infernal lie." It was well known, said my Lord, that his little friend, Nelly Leigh,

was scarcely half Strangeway's age, and that she and his young cousin, Harry Forrester, had been boy-and-girl lovers since they were children, and it wasn't likely she would marry a —— and his Lordship used expressions couched in good, plain language, the reverse of complimentary to Sir George.

It seemed at first that Strangeways, who was present, was about to strike his defamer, but at last, with a muttered, "You shall hear of this, my Lord," he flung out of the cardroom. Three days later Lord Sidcaster received a note from him, enclosing one signed by Miss Leigh and her father, and assuming that his Lordship would now retract the expressions he had used, unless he wished the young lady's veracity to be impugned. The affair ended without a duel, chiefly, it was said, owing to a letter Lord Sidcaster had received from his "little friend," and the day appointed for the wedding drew on apace. But I think that, had my Lord been able to transport himself to this very inn where we now are, whither Mr. Leigh had brought his daughter, and glance into this very room, it may be, and seen the speechless, helpless grief of father and child, he would have affronted Sir George yet more insultingly, and forced him to a hostile meeting.

It was the old story—the daughter sacrificing herself to save the father's honour, perhaps, even his liberty. For foolish, sanguine, unworldly Mr. Leigh was deep in the books of Ruinsheimer & Co.; payment was impossible, and the money-lenders had begun to hint about fraud and misrepresentation and—their penalty. And then Sir George had appeared as the benevolent *Deus ex machinâ*, had shown chivalrous indignation and ardent championship, which, after a journey to London, "to see these scoundrelly usurers," had become grave and sympathetically apprehensive. The "rascals were too clever for simple gentlemen; he was afraid things looked black; for himself, what man could do he would." And then one day he bewildered the terrified old clergyman by announcing his wish to make Nellie his wife, in which event—owing, he said, to the terms under which he held

his property—he would be able, and, he need not say, willing, to take the liability on himself.

A few years before, when Nellie's gentle mother lay a-dying, she had drawn the weeping child to her tender, loving heart, and charged her always to help and comfort her father, who would soon have no one but her. Nellie remembered the promise that she made, and, looking at that father's kindly face, wrung and grey with anguish and fear, resolved to keep it, albeit in doing so she destroyed her own happiness and that of another. For my Lord Sidcaster had been correct in what he had said about her and Harry Forrester. Sweethearts from childhood, they had only recently learned that each was to other dearer than aught in the world beside, save, as poor Nellie moaned to herself, duty and faith plighted to the dead. And so she had come here to be married in the old chapel of the Court, and from this window would gaze on it, pale and tearless, as a condemned prisoner might gaze from his prison grating on the scaffold which awaits him; while poor old Mr. Leigh would kiss her cold hand, and stroke her hair, and whisper broken words of love and comfort and self-reproach, and wonder in his sad, remorseful heart why to him, who had ever preached and urged to his parish the efficacy of prayer, his supplication that he might die was not granted!

One day Nellie was alone—not tearless now or gazing at yonder grey ruin, but with streaming eyes and head bent low upon the table in an agony of grief. She had that morning received a letter from Harry Forrester, and before the piteousness of its hopeless, passionate pleading, the barriers of her unnatural self-control had been swept away.

"Oh! my darling, my darling!" she murmured, "to think that you must suffer too. Oh, it is too hard—too hard! Is there no hope?—no one to help?"

Unconsciously she had been speaking half aloud, and the sound of her own voice recalled to her the uselessness of her wail, and filled her with a momentary bitterness.

"No one to help," she repeated with a hard little mirthless laugh, infinitely pitiful to hear. "Certainly not

amongst the living ; it is the dead to whom I am pledged. Oh, mother, mother, if you only knew ! ”

To her wrought senses it seemed as though she was no longer alone. She raised her eyes, half expecting to see the form of her mother, and yet blaming herself for her foolish hysterical fancy. Fancy or no fancy, a woman's figure seemed to stand looking at her, not the gentle, well-remembered form of her mother, but a girl, scarcely older than herself, with dark, imperial beauty and queenly pose. The lovely face was pale and sad and stern, but as the dark eyes looked at the grief-stricken girl they grew tender and pitying, and though there was no sound yet it seemed to Nellie as if from the faultless coral lips there came the word—“ Hope.”

And then the girl knew she was alone again, alone, with throbbing heart and whirling brain, yet with a vague, mysterious lightening of her sorrow, a faint, persistent echo of that strangely whispered word.

Through the open window came the voices of her father, and—save the mark !—of her lover, and she rose from her seat and looked out. Mr. Leigh seemed to be urging a request with all the earnestness of his gentle, timid nature ; urging it still with pitiful gestures of entreaty, despite the evident anger of the man he was addressing. In a flash Nellie understood the position. That morning, seeing her wild burst of misery, Mr. Leigh had determined to make one other effort to break the match ; he had met Sir George and appealed to his pity, his generosity, his friendship to devise some other scheme of assistance than this which involved his daughter's broken heart.

As well might he have pleaded with an iceberg. Sir George was courteous, sympathetic, smilingly incredulous as to the young lady's alleged unhappiness, and gravely and reproachfully eloquent upon the impossibility of Mr. Leigh or his daughter departing from their plighted word. As things stood there was no other possible way of escaping the vengeance of Messrs. Ruinsheimer—in fact, any such change in the arrangements as Mr. Leigh seemed to suggest would not only exasperate them tenfold, but

would place him (Sir George) in the painful position of having pledged his word to a falsehood.

This last, he could see, was a telling argument, and he urged it again and again with well-simulated indignation.

"Dear father!" murmured Nellie to herself. "He mustn't endanger or humiliate himself for me. I must go on with it, and the more cheerfully the better for him," and, opening the window, she stepped into the garden. Some fancy made her glance back into the room. There again stood the figure she had seen, with a strange look of comfort and encouragement in her dark eyes, and on her lips the soundless whisper—"Hope."

CHAPTER III.

It was in a strange frame of mind that Nellie approached the two gentlemen. Try as she would to reason herself out of the idea, the belief grew strong within her that what she had seen was no mere trick of the imagination, the outcome of anguish and over-wrought feelings, but an actual apparition. Weird though the conviction was, she felt no fear—only a vague trust that somehow, some whence, help was coming to her in her terrible trouble, and so independent of herself would this help be that she must pursue her self-imposed task of sacrifice readily, even, if it might be, cheerfully. Her first duty was to ensure her father's safety, which, she felt persuaded, was being imperilled by his appeal to the baronet.

"You promised to shew us over the Court, Sir George," she remarked, after the first greetings had been exchanged. "Why should we not walk over now?"

Sir George was delighted. This unlooked for proposal on the part of his cold, statuesque, *fiancée* made him fancy that the marble was beginning to glow in response to his own passion; even Mr. Leigh began to flatter himself with the hope that, after all, Nellie's aversion was only a young girl's fancy, which was already wearing off.

"A capital idea!" he replied, gaily. "The new

sovereign paying an informal visit to her kingdom, eh, Mr. Leigh? We will start directly you are ready."

"A goodly heritage!" exclaimed Mr. Leigh, with a glance half deprecating, half cheery, at his daughter as they emerged from the long avenue of limes and found themselves facing the massive columns surrounding the entrance. And so, in good sooth, it was. Goodly in its fair proportions, in its park and woods and meadow land, in its wide vista of teeming acres and placid meres, and in the potent charm of tradition, of—

tales that have the rime of age
And chronicles of eld,

of which building and greensward and copse were alike eloquent. Clustering over the porch was a rose-tree, the blossoms on which attracted Nellie's attention strangely. They were of a dead, shadowy white, utterly different from any she had seen, and possessing a tender, wistful beauty which seemed to the girl infinitely pathetic. She enquired the name, and fancied, though his answer was smiling and courteous as ever, that in some way the subject was distasteful to the baronet.

"Yes, it is a kind that is not often seen in England, I believe. It is called the *Bel Espoir*—a pretty name, and let me hope that your asking it is a happy augury."

He was smiling tenderly and bending forward with lover-like *empressement*, and yet—yet, something told Nellie that the sweet foreign flower had been planted and fostered by the beautiful dead girl who had come to the Court in the flush of her love and youth and imperial beauty, to live there a few stormy years and to be cruelly done to death on the treacherous Ionian strand.

"It is very beautiful," she said, quietly.

"And like many other beautiful things is *tant peu que soit difficile*," laughed Sir George. "You see, all the blossoms are out of reach, but"—in a low whisper—"you shall have some on Thursday."

Ah! Thursday, her wedding-day! How vain seemed the vague hope she was cherishing. Well, well, she would "dree her weird," purchase her dear old father's

safety, and then, pray God, her wedding-robe might be her winding-sheet.

The inside of the house was in keeping with the exterior ; carved oak, marble columns, priceless statuary, old time armour and weapons, masterpieces of painting, greeted the eye at every turn. The broad staircase led to a picture gallery where, for a moment, Mr. Leigh, forgot his own and his daughter's trouble amid the art treasures around him. A servant brought a message to the baronet, who left them for a few minutes with profuse apologies, and Nellie wandered into one of the side rooms attracted by the sight of some carving. The room seemed to have been a boudoir—"my predecessor's in title," the girl thought bitterly, and was listlessly leaving, when something caught her eye which made her stop as if turned to stone. It was a full length portrait of a woman, and on the frame below was the name "Mercedes, Lady Strangeways." It was her "predecessor in title," and *it was the portrait of the figure she had twice that morning seen at the inn.* There was the same queenly pose, the same sweet, proud face, the same glorious, unfathomable eyes. She was painted standing, with a smile of love and happiness parting the full red lips, and one hand—the wedding hand—holding a spray of her favourite flowers, the sweet, phantom-like, roses of Bel Espoir.

Sir George's voice in the hall recalled Nellie to herself, and she hurriedly left the room, casting as she went a glance of love and pity at the face which seemed to her as that of a dear friend, and receiving—so her fancy told her—an answering glance of tenderness and promise from the large dark eyes.

She scarcely knew how she got through the remainder of the visit. She seemed in a dream—a happy dream—in which she talked easily and even gaily to her host, despite an undercurrent of repulsion and horror.

"Every minute will seem an age between this and the day after to-morrow," he whispered, as they left the gallery. "I can scarcely realise that in a few hours at the most you will be my wife—my wife."

It was well that maidenly reserve did away with the necessity of any answer, for it is doubtful if she could have kept the horror and loathing she felt out of her voice. His wife! At that moment they passed the high mullioned window which lighted the gallery, and a sudden gust of sweet summer air wafted something in which fell at the girl's feet.

It was a Bel Espoir rose from the creeper outside.

CHAPTER IV.

THE wedding day arrived. According to the custom of the Strangeways, the ceremony was to be performed in the old chapel by special license. It was to be a quiet wedding, yet not so quiet but that that morning and the preceding day parties of guests arrived, giving the little village quite a gala appearance. For the Strangeways, of Strangeways Court, were personages in their day. I was amongst those bidden to the ceremony. Fain would I have excused myself. I had—had known the first Lady Strangeways when she was Mercedes Trevenna. Ah! those were happy days. Even now, after all the sad years that have passed, it seems to me that all the joy and brightness of life were for me crowded into those young days beside the Cornish seas. I was a trustee for certain property which Mercedes had inherited from her mother, distinct from the Trevenna estates, and, the devolution of this being somewhat different, certain legal formalities necessitated my presence. I might still, doubtless, have avoided the ceremony itself, but Mr. Leigh and his daughter urged me so earnestly, even piteously, to be present, that I consented. According to custom, the attendants of the bride did not follow her into the chapel, but awaited her between the altar and the "priest's door," which opened into a low, vaulted room. It was a glorious morning, an ideal day for a happy wedding—the sky cloudless, trees and flowers aglow in their fresh summer bravery, the air fragrant with nature's

own incense, the birds in the surrounding woods singing the sweetest of all epithalamiums. And yet—I had seen Nellie Leigh for a moment that morning, and had turned away, bidding God pity her; for her face told me that surely none upon His sad earth needed pity more.

Sir George Strangeways stood ready at the chancel steps—looking handsome, indeed, but with a look of heartless, sensual triumph that made one shudder. Did his thoughts, I wondered, go back for a moment to that day, five years before, when he had stood in the same place awaiting another bride? Did her face come before him as it was *then*, radiant in its matchless beauty, or did he think of it as he saw it last, disfigured with murderous gashes, and crimsoned with the life-blood from the gaping wound across the white throat—the throat that he had kissed and fondled and decked with jewels? Poor Mercedes! Of the beauty, the passion, the joy of life and rapturous love all too fleeting, nothing remains but the marble monument on which the sun's rays fall in crimson and gold and blue, and the words, which seem a mockery at this time and with these surroundings:

"Sacred to the Memory of Mercedes, wife of Sir George Strangeways."

There was a sound and a movement of expectancy, and a whisper ran through the chapel—"The bride has arrived!" There was a pause, and then Mr. Leigh came out of the priest's door and beckoned to me. I made my way towards him with some difficulty, and, to my astonishment, as I reached the entrance, it seemed to me that the clergyman was beginning the address. The figures of the bridesmaids clustering round prevented me seeing, and, convinced that my ears had deceived me, I entered the room. Nelly Leigh was lying on the floor in a dead faint, her lips parted as in a smile, and her face, save for its pallor, alight with a strange, weird happiness. Her father, seemingly beside himself, was bending over her, chafing her cold hands and murmuring broken words of pity and anguish. As I bent over the prostrate figure I heard again the same voice repeating—and this time there was no room for doubt—the solemn words:—"Into

which holy estate these two persons present come now to to be joined." Good heavens! what could it mean? The bride—one of the "two persons"—was lying senseless at my feet!

"Do you not hear?" I asked Mr. Leigh excitedly. He only looked up vacuously, and resumed his pitiful croon: "My darling! my Nellie! I have killed her; I have killed her!"

And still the voice went on. I sprang to my feet and hurried to the door, and as I opened it came the words, "I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment." The rest of the monition was lost in my struggle towards the altar. Against the wall was a low bench, and on this I sprung, and looked. At the chancel steps two figures were kneeling: one was Sir George; the other—oh, merciful God! who was this other, clad in bridal array, her face bent low in her hands? Ah! I knew, I knew; and with the knowledge my poor, lonely heart gave a glad leap of love and wonder, and then grew still and cold with a nameless terror. As the clergyman made the formal pause at the end of the charge, the bride raised her head and looked at the bridegroom; and then through the old chapel there rang a hoarse shriek, which came from the pallid lips of Sir George, who had sprung backward, and was gazing, with hands outstretched and horror-filled eyes, at his bride. For the face gazing at him *was not that of Nellie Leigh, but of Mercedes Trevenna*—was not of the Living, but the Dead, and across the throat was a sinister crimson line. Slowly, with an awful, pitiless meaning, she raised her hand and pointed to the wound, and then, with a yell as of a lost spirit, "Mercedes! the wife I murdered!" Sir George fell forward in a fit.

All was confusion; every one pressed forward to assist, and in the excitement none seemed to notice that the bride had disappeared. Presently awestruck whispers inquired, "Where's the bride?"

"She is in a dead faint in the priest's room," I replied. "Her father is with her, and her maid had better come. No one else."

The explanation seemed natural, and before people could begin to question and compare notes as to "how" and "when," another startling occurrence engrossed their attention. Amongst those present in the church were three men who seemed somewhat out of place amongst the well-dressed wedding guests. One, the youngest, was evidently a sailor, the other two were not so easily classable, having no salient characteristics except a certain dogged expression of countenance, and well-built, sinewy frames. The trio had entered the chapel just after the service had begun, and, keeping together, had unobtrusively insinuated their way towards the chancel. The terrible exclamation made by Sir George before he fell had not been unnoticed by them, and significant looks and a guarded whisper had been exchanged. When, after a few minutes, the baronet recovered and gazed round with wild looks of terror, they were in the group immediately surrounding him.

"Where—where?" he began, and then recalling himself with an evident effort, "I will go home. I am ill, very ill."

Then one of the strangers stepped forward.

"Sorry to interfere," he said, shortly, "but duty is duty. I arrest you, Sir George Strangeways, for the murder of your wife, Mercedes, in the Levant."

As he spoke he laid his hand on the baronet's shoulder, and for a moment the wretched man seemed to collapse under the touch, while those around stood speechless. Twice within the last few minutes had they heard the horrible word murder, both times as applied to the same person. Then Sir George nerved himself to face the position; the Strangeways, whatever their faults, were no cowards, and there was something tangible to grapple with—*now*.

"Murder! my wife! You must be mad, fellow. My lamented wife—*The boy, by G—d!*"

While he had been speaking the young sailor had pressed forward, and caught the baronet's eye, with the result that the latter's contemptuous disclaimer froze upon his lips and gave place to the hoarse, despairing words of recognition. He staggered against a pillar,

and stood, breathing heavily with hands pressed to heart and head. Then he looked up, and his face though deadly pale had resumed its usual sneering expression. He bowed to the police officer.

"Of course, you are only doing your duty, and I am at your service. It is, however, some most ridiculous mistake, as this paper will show you. See here."

He drew his hand quickly from his breast; there was a flash and a loud report, and Sir George Strangeways fell dead by his own hand, his brains scattered on the chancel steps.

* * * *

There is but little more to tell. The young sailor had been a cabin boy, who had deserted from a ship which touched at the Greek island. There were no brigands; it was Sir George himself who had fiercely attacked and murdered his wife, and when the boy had unexpectedly appeared on the scene, and bravely attempted to save her, had, as he thought, killed him. But the boy was, by a miracle, only stunned, though to all appearance dead, and he recovered in time to watch the artistic wounding Sir George inflicted on himself. Then he lost consciousness again, and was found, half-delirious, by an old Greek who combined profit with charity by handing him over to the next ship that touched. But in his delirium the boy had picked up a pistol he had seen the murderer drop, and when a few weeks previously, he had at last returned to England, an overpowering impulse for which he could not account forced him to communicate with the police.

The large estates of the Strangeways and Trevenna families went to distant kinsmen, but, by a strange irony of fate, Mr. Leigh benefited, after all, by his connection with Sir George. In pursuance of his schemes to get the poor old parson completely in his power, the Baronet—as Ruinsheimer & Co.—had compelled him to purchase a piece of absolutely barren land somewhere in Cornwall, and then to mortgage it, making unwittingly statements about its value, which formed the subject of the "very

serious charge" that was held *in terrorem* over him. When this came to my knowledge I made certain enquiries and investigations, with the result that the said barren piece of land proved to be inconceivably rich in mineral, and the kind, weak old man found himself suddenly wealthy.

The mystery attending the frustrated wedding was soon lost sight of, the subsequent excitement and confusion combining to convince people that the bride had been in reality Nellie Leigh, and that the unearthly face, the crimson gash, and her strange disappearance were, after all, only due to her impending swoon, a conveniently-suggested ruby necklet, and the concentration of everybody's attention on the bridegroom. But I knew better—and so did Nellie.

"*You* know how I was saved," she whispered to me the first time I saw her afterwards.

"Yes, I know," was my answer.

"God bless her," she said softly, with a sob.

When had that prayer not been mine?

"God bless her," I repeated.

A year afterwards she married her boy lover, Harry Forrester, and few married lives have been happier. But, in her happiness, she never forgot the beautiful murdered wife whose spirit had been permitted to aid her in her woe, and on every anniversary of that awful wedding-day a wreath of flowers is placed upon Mercedes' tomb. The flowers are the *Bel Espoir* rose, and they rest beside the little cross of lilies which, ever since she died, I have laid there in memory of my childhood's loved companion, whose favourites they were.

WALTER RICHARDS.

A Plain Girl's Romance.

CHAPTER I.

ESTHER CAMPBELL was undoubtedly plain, and perhaps that was the reason why Mrs. Casnove, who had three good-looking sons of her own, chose her out of numerous applicants to be her companion.

Miss Campbell was a lady (according to the privilege of the present day, most women are the same), but she was one by birth, her father a clergyman of the Church of England and a gentleman, and her mother also of gentle blood.

The visitors at Mrs. Casnove's who were themselves well-bred, treated her as a lady ; those who were ill-bred, did not. And yet the blame did not entirely rest upon their shoulders, for Miss Campbell was a worm who would never turn. Tread upon her—she lay under your feet ; bring her a few steps up the social ladder—there she would remain, always ready at the slightest touch to slide down into a more recumbent position.

She was of a timid, retiring disposition, and shockingly weak-minded—one who required to lean upon some strong nature, and one who would invariably go to the wall.

And she was plain—fearfully so ; not ugly, not repulsive, for there was kindness and gentleness in her countenance, there was no great defect that irritated the eye and made one long to send for Mr. Alexander Ross and his wonderful instruments, only that Mother Nature had not favoured this child, had not modelled the face according to beauty's lines, had not bestowed her matchless colouring : neither had she any figure, except a bad one ; she was not graceful, possessed no supple swing, was

rather short, her hair of a light, nondescript colour, her eyes pale, and eyebrows and lashes to match the hair.

Poor little Miss Campbell was an only child; but if the olive branches in her father's household did not increase, neither did his stipend, and when the great separation took place, and father and mother both died within the week (too large a share of the family for Death to have taken, considering his enormous majority), little Esther was "taken care of" by an aunt, and afterwards drafted away at a mature age to a small provincial school in France as English teacher. At this *lycée* the girls were kept as closely as sheep in a pen, and Esther, strictly forbidden, under terrible penalties, to speak anything but English to the young ladies, did not obtain the true Parisian accent as, no doubt, she ought to have done. Her accent was rather peculiar; it was not quite English and certainly not French; it amused Mr. Fred and Mr. John Casnove so much that they nicknamed their mother's companion "Mademoiselle." Her position in Mrs. Casnove's house was rather a peculiar one. That lady, to do her justice, was always kind though fidgety and possessing crotchets. The two sons at home, young men over twenty, patronised her and were kind too. The servants, of whom she stood much in awe, pitied her and would have been friendly had she been less shy and reserved, and they patronised her also. Miss Campbell did not make the best of herself, she was over twenty and she knew nothing of fashions; she dressed her hair in the unbecoming way she had years ago been compelled to wear it, without any reference to the block in the hairdresser's window; she was as innocent as a certain Undine (I have never read about her) is said to have been. She was not fond of reading, because novels and entertaining literature had been strictly prohibited during her girlhood, and the books she read aloud to Mrs. Casnove she did not understand. There were plenty of novels about the house, both French and English; but Miss Campbell had imbibed the opinions of her elders and shrank from playing with "devils' weapons." She read aloud a good deal in a monotonous voice which Mrs. Casnove liked, for it sent

her to sleep, and she played chess, cribbage and bezique all very badly with that lady—another fault also not objected to, for Mrs. Casnove was not superior to that weakness engendered in most of us—a love of winning.

Miss Campbell was no musician, playing in a wooden, laborious style ; she learned the boy's accompaniments, however difficult, as she would have done anything else had they told her ; she played them perfectly correctly, but without the smallest degree of expression.

It was a dull house, notwithstanding it was the home of two young men, dull for a girl ; she did not know it ; she had never been used to anything more exciting, for the boys did not spend many evenings at home, and when their friends were there she kept out of the way. She was so very ignorant of the world, this little plain Mademoiselle ; she knew the boys stayed out late at night, and went to theatres and concerts, which of course was very wicked ; she knew nothing of such places, except that they were very dreadful, and she wouldn't have gone with them had they asked her, which they never did.

Their mother's companion was very useful to these boys, she was always ready to sew on buttons, bind music, or wire flowers, but she never asked them questions as to the great things they saw and the great places they visited, and consequently they never volunteered their information ; indeed, they invariably changed their tones to one of mild banter when they addressed her, treating her, for all her twenty-one years, as a child. When she poured out their coffee at breakfast, and at such meals when their invalid mother was not present, they would playfully tease her about the Frenchmen she had met abroad, asking her how they had proposed, how often she wrote to "him," what his profession was, and when the happy day was to be. The hot colour used then to rush into Esther's pale face, not becomingly as is the case with most girls, and she would wriggle about under their gaze. I don't know whether Miss Campbell liked, or disliked, this teasing ; I don't think the boys did either ; it gave them a few moments' amusement, so perhaps they did not care.

Mrs. Casnove's eldest son, Gerard, was now quartered at Gibraltar, and perhaps he was the only subject upon which Esther ever questioned the brothers. That he was by far the best looking she could see by his photographs, one in uniform, and another in fancy costume, and she thought she should like him, although she had never seen him, better than his brothers, whom she had seen, for he had actually thought of her, and sent her messages, such as :

"I hope, dearest mother, you still like your companion; tell her from me that I hope she will take great care of you, and see the servants send up your sweetbread properly cooked."

And :

"Tell Miss Campbell she will have to practise very hard if she ever means to beat you at chess ; I shall coach her myself when I return, and will see if our united efforts cannot produce a different result."

That Gerard was his mother's favourite, it was not difficult to see, and when Mrs. Casnove was in an irritable mood, Miss Campbell made the invariable remark :

"How glad you must be that Mr. Gerard is coming home soon," which drifted Mrs. Casnove's thoughts into a different channel.

Not only had nature bestowed bountifully upon Mrs. Casnove's eldest son, but fortune had scarcely been less kind—his godmother, a wealthy woman with a complaint that any day might prove fatal, had openly proclaimed him as her heir. It was most unfair, as Fred said, that Gerard should have all the luck ; he wouldn't mind the difference in appearance so much, if he only had a godmother with an incurable complaint.

Miss Campbell was much shocked at Mr. Fred's remark. She inwardly trusted that he had spoken without thought, but her mind was soon diverted by John's next words.

"Gerry's mistaken his vocation : he's thrown away as a soldier ; he ought never to have been anything but an actor."

"Godmamma would not have approved, but he'd have

knocked all the rest into a cocked hat if he had gone on the boards ; he's the finest mimic I ever knew," was Fred's reply.

CHAPTER II.

MR. GERARD CASNOVE did not belie the character Miss Campbell had attributed to him. He was much kinder, much more a man of the world than his brothers ; he brightened every meal, and transformed the house ; her only regret was that he was so much out of it.

He teased her pleasantly about her industry in knitting, telling her her work seemed like Penelope's—never finished ; she had no idea who Penelope was, though she assured him gravely she had finished many shawls, besides numerous pairs of cuffs for winter wear.

He never joked her himself about the Frenchman, though he was present when his brothers did so, and he seemed sometimes startled, almost shocked, by her ignorance of commonplace facts.

"That child's brain will stagnate if she doesn't have something to rouse her," he said to John. "A love affair would open her eyes and set her square."

"You'd better propose to her yourself, old man," was the answer.

"Perhaps I shall," said Gerard, beginning to whistle ; "I might do worse."

"I shan't envy you your wife, then, if I do everything else ; but look here, old man, don't be late for the rehearsal to-night, there's sure to be a squabble, and they'll be wanting your advice."

"I will not ; we shall want some indeed if we're to produce anything good. Amateurs have such a confounded awkwardness in acting, and you can't shake it out of them."

"Try to teach Mademoiselle a part, she'd be an apt pupil if you like ; it would be a nice occupation for you, as you are rather smitten."

"No, John, my dear boy," he said, as he bit the end off his cigar, "the line must be drawn somewhere, you know. If I take the trouble to teach Miss Campbell how to love, you or some other kind friend must teach her how to act."

Esther enjoyed the dinner hour now Gerard was at home, far more than she would have believed possible; she liked to listen to the conversation, sometimes, of course, it was about Dizzy and other men of whom she had never heard, and they all talked excitedly, sometimes even angrily, she could not understand why, when no one was disagreeing with them. She did not listen to the conversation when it turned to the topic of "Bills," but fortunately for her politics were not always discussed, and then Mr. Gerard Casnove would relate stories that made his mother laugh, and were very often deeply interesting to her; for he would speak of the places he had visited, and the curious customs of the people.

"It's a strange thing how different the customs of people are, even from their next-door neighbours," he said one evening. "Now, mother, how do you think a Portuguese gentleman proposes?"

"The same way as an Englishman, I suppose, Gerry."

"No! not a bit of it. The way a girl gets engaged out there is like this. She sits at the window till some stranger passes who admires her; he instantly stops and stares at her—perhaps for half-an-hour. An English girl would move away, and call a servant to pull down the blind, but the fair ones there stand their ground, or, rather, sit it; and this process is repeated day after day till the lover brings his guitar, which means about the same as making a definite proposal; for he is afterwards invited indoors, and, if they are mutually satisfied with one another, the final ceremony in time takes place."

Mrs. Casnove laughed.

"I certainly prefer our English custom to that one," she said.

"It's lucky it isn't ours; for Miss Campbell always sits at the window to work, and we shouldn't want a crowd

always round our house," said Fred, dyeing Esther's face crimson by his words ; and Gerard, seeing her confusion, went on to relate some other story.

Two evenings afterwards, Esther Campbell sat in her customary place by the window knitting ; a shaded lamp cast its dim light about the room, but she required no light to perform her eternal task, but sat, as she always did, by the window with the blind drawn up, looking occasionally into the square.

Mrs. Casnove was dozing, with the *St. James's Gazette* in her lap, giving an occasional snore, which always woke her up, when she again took up the paper, and in a few more minutes fell asleep.

There were not many objects of interest to engross one's attention in the square ; cabs constantly rattled through, but people seldom walked by the iron railings, having a natural preference for the paved thoroughfare by the houses, and these pedestrians could not be seen from the upstairs drawing room windows. In the winter afternoons Esther would watch the lamplighter lighting the lamps, and set herself a difficult task to accomplish, which she would struggle to complete before he had finished his round—an innocent race, of which one of the competitors was wholly unconscious.

To-night she was thinking of Gerard ; he had been in to say good-night to his mother as he was going out for the evening. She did not know whether he had left the house as yet ; she had not heard the whistle for the hansom, and Mr. Gerard was more extravagant than his brothers in engaging cabs. It was not often she thought about places of amusement, but she did wonder now what they could be like. She wished young Mr. Casnove did not care so much for gaiety, and that he would live at home as his brothers did. She sighed unconsciously at the thought that, when his leave expired, the brothers would remain to continue their thoughtless teasing, but no one would be there to tell interesting tales.

The *St. James's Gazette* dropped from Mrs. Casnove's lap on to the floor. Esther looked to see whether that lady desired her to pick it up, but found her in a profound

slumber; then, as she glanced again out of the window, her eyes fell upon a man standing opposite, the light from a lamp bringing his features into prominence. He was standing—yes, Esther could scarcely believe her eyes—staring up at her window. She moved away; then returned. He was still there. She stole on tip-toe to the other side of the room and remained there, for, as she believed, several minutes; but on walking again to the window, she saw him standing in the same position. All that Mr. Gerard had told her about the strange foreign customs rushed through her mind, and her heart beat wildly with excitement. It could not really be that this stranger had taken a fancy to her. She had never had any attention from men before; it must be some mistake. She looked out once more; then, resuming her seat, she continued her work. She had seen enough of the stranger to perceive that he was very tall—taller than Mr. Gerard, she thought; and that he wore a long, black cloak. His face in that light looked very pale; or, it might have appeared so in contrast to his jet-black hair, which was curly and longer than any of the Casnoves wore theirs; his moustache was also thick and long; she was sure his dress and *tout ensemble* proclaimed him a foreigner. Again she took a hasty glance. He had not moved and his eyes were still upon her. Never had she had such an adventure as this; there had not been one passage of romance in the whole course of her life. Even now she felt that there must be some mistake. She began to grow nervous, and wished ardently that he would go. She was thankful Gerard and John were out and that Fred had friends in his den. Great waves of heat rushed over her at the thought that they might leave the house and see him; but she remembered that on running upstairs to fetch some more wool half-an-hour ago, she had heard a strange voice singing, and that, in all probability, meant that they were having what Mr. Fred called a smoking-concert. In that event, both she and the mysterious stranger were safe from detection. Esther's heart beat wildly, though she kept her position, yet forebore even to cast a timid glance over to the square railings, till Mrs. Casnove's voice caused

her to start violently and drop her knitting. In obedience to her call, she restored the fallen paper and fetched the cribbage-board, only stealing a glance out of the window before settling to cards to find out that the stranger had disappeared.

To say that Esther had forgotten this remarkable circumstance by the next evening would be untrue, for it had seldom been out of her head for more than a minute all day; and yet, when glancing up from her work across the square, she again saw the mysterious stranger, her heart leapt from surprise and she trembled from head to foot with agitation. He was standing in the same position under the lamp-post, with one arm thrown carelessly round it, staring earnestly up at the window—it must be, incredible as it might seem—at her. To-night she could not move; she appeared rooted to the spot, glad that her flaming cheeks must pass unobserved. It was a hard task to keep her head resolutely turned away from the eyes that seemed drawing hers to meet them. Perhaps she must before long have yielded, had not Mrs. Casnove taken a shorter nap than usual and awoke with a brisk—

“Now, Esther, my dear——”

She laid down her knitting and rose, looking as she did so over to the stranger, who, evidently taking it for a signal that she was leaving the window, took off his hat with a sweeping salute, crossed the street, and vanished.

They played chess that night, and Esther was checkmated in three games, while her queen rushed heedlessly into perilous positions in a manner that called forth Mrs. Casnove's astonished comments.

If Miss Campbell did obtain any sleep, her looks the next morning belied her; she forgot, too, to sweeten John's coffee, and gave Fred his without milk—unheard-of mistakes for Esther to make, whose mind never soared above domestic duties and fed entirely “on commonplaces in a narrow range.” With feverish impatience she watched the hands of the clock slowly wending their way round, till another and another long hour had passed away for ever, and the desired, though dreaded, evening time had arrived.

To Miss Campbell's horror, Gerard followed them into the drawing room, and seemed in no hurry to leave. On an ordinary occasion she would have been delighted for him to stay, but now she feared lest he, too, should see what she hoped, yet feared to see, and draw his conclusions; but Mrs. Casnove was not well, and her son sat with her. During a break in the conversation he came over to where poor, shaking Esther sat, to be, he said, initiated into the art of knitting. The long needles knocked hopelessly together, nearly a whole row was dropped, while Miss Campbell's incoherent explanations left the interlocutor as much a novice as before. She thought he would think he was the cause of her agitation; and possibly he did, for he smiled a kindly, but amused, smile.

"Will you accept a challenge from me, mother?" he said, walking back to Mrs. Casnove. "I'm getting rusty in my chess-playing, and I've hindered Miss Campbell so much that she will require a little extra time to catch up those lost stitches."

A game of chess with Gerard was rather a lengthy proceeding, and at the conclusion Mrs. Casnove felt unequal to any more brain fatigue, and said she would go to bed. Gerard accompanied her to her room, said he should finish his evening at the barracks, and wished them both good-night.

Twenty minutes later, Esther returned to the drawing-room, in an unsettled frame of mind. Her one fear had been lest the mysterious stranger should arrive during Gerard's presence; and, though her wish had been granted, she confessed to herself the disappointment she felt at his non-appearance.

Walking to the window, she stood there looking out; a gentleman with a fox-terrier approached the lamp-post. The gentleman stopped, pulled out a letter, and began to read, while the dog went through the railings into the square, where, judging from a series of short, sharp, excited barks that followed, it may be presumed that he fell in with a cat and chased her home. After prolonged whistling, and beating the rails with a stick, the truant

was induced to return, and the two passed away out of Esther's sight. She, too, was thinking of leaving her watch-tower to settle down to the piano, to master the accompaniment of a new song of John's, when a tremor ran through her; for out of the darkness the tall, well-known form of the stranger had appeared, and he, seeing her, bowed.

Esther sprang back as though she had been shot, then, fearing she had been rude, again approached. Once more the stranger bowed, and, worse still, beckoned. For one instant Esther stood as one petrified, a terrible feeling of having been insulted came upon her; but his foreign customs dispelling this idea, and partly recovering from her surprise, she shook her head. Again he beckoned, and crossed, as though to meet her at the hall-door.

Timid of all men as Esther was, she was conscious of something so terribly formidable and appalling in this unknown man coming to call on her, that her consternation endowed her with courage and determination hitherto unknown.

Terrified lest he should ring, she ran down the stairs quicker than she ever had since the donning of long frocks, casting agonised glances at the closed doors she passed, lest any should open and one of the young men, or servants, appear. Then, with shaking hands, she flung open the heavy door, while the overhanging lamp threw its brilliant light on her and on the man who, at the bottom of the steps, stood facing her—the only man who had ever shown her any attention, and the only man she was destined ever to love.

CHAPTER III.

ALTHOUGH Esther Campbell has rehearsed that scene hundreds—no, I will say thousands—of times over to herself, I doubt if she could give any friend a coherent account of what took place. Instinct told her to close the door, without quite shutting it; instinct told her to retreat

into one of the recesses of the portico, sheltered by a massive pillar ; but when she found him by her side, his eyes rivetted on her face, reason, instinct, even sense, fled, and she stood shaking before him, unable to utter one single sound.

All her senses seemed numbed, and his first words, spoken with a strong foreign accent, fell meaninglessly upon her ear, then she became conscious of hearing herself called " Madame " in a manner that reminded her of the French bootmaker who tried on Mrs. Casnove's boots, and of his saying, " I have watched and loved you ; our customs with you are wrong, but they are not with us. In my country I am a noble, in yours a refugee, and my name Don Alonzo Carlos Alvarez."

There were many books of plays in Mrs. Casnove's house, Young's among them, but Miss Campbell had never read any, so no singularity in the name struck her. Esther's breath came in gasps.

" You must not come again," she faltered, " you will be seen. I came to tell you so."

" But, Madame, have pity ; I love you." There was a quiver in his low, musical voice, and looking into his handsome face, Miss Campbell felt that it would not be very difficult to return that love.

" I must go in," she cried hurriedly, timidity overcoming all other emotions.

" But I may come again ; I will go away at your bidding always ; and oh ! Madame, I love you."

" You cannot really love me ; no one ever has," she panted, her words coming with difficulty, excitement and astonishment rendering her almost speechless.

" And is that any reason why Madame never should be loved ?" he asked in gentle accents ; and Esther thought his voice the sweetest and pleasantest she had ever heard, better even than Mr. Gerard's, and his was musical ; but with passionate declarations Don Alonzo vowed that his heart had leaped when he first saw her, and that she was the only woman he had ever loved.

Esther went half stupefied to her bedroom. The greatest event in the whole of her life had now taken

place, and yet there was such an air of unreality about it, that she almost feared that she should presently awake, to find it all a dream.

During the next fortnight, Miss Campbell saw her lover rather frequently ; sometimes, indeed, she would sit for hours at the window, and have to leave it at last, disappointed ; on other occasions she would be thrown into a state of nervous terror by Gerard remaining too long in the drawing room ; but though they had many narrow escapes from detection, Don Alonzo was careful to watch till the three young men had left the house, or till Esther gave him a signal. There were evenings when a prolonged game of chess, or cards, prevented them exchanging more than a few hurried words, but Mrs. Casnove was not often so exacting, and the chief part of Esther's evenings were free. Once she was persuaded to put on a cloak, and walk with him round the square, a walk made memorable by its exquisite joy turning to terrified despair at its close ; in her half-delirious excitement she had left the house, forgetting that she could not regain admittance without acquainting a servant with her nocturnal stroll ; but the Spaniard, with his fascinating smile, told her that love laughs at locks, and, drawing a bunch of keys from his pocket, found one that opened the door, and so effected her entrance.

Political reasons prevented his openly declaring himself her lover, or coming in daylight to the house ; he might at any moment have to fly, his safety, indeed his life, hung on a thread, so he told her, and Esther, poor little innocent, ignorant Esther, believed him.

One miserable week Miss Campbell experienced, when she suffered the very essence of *ennui*. Mr. Gerard was invited to spend a week at his godmother's at Ventnor, an invitation there was no declining, and unfortunately political troubles called Don Alonzo away at the same time. Esther had hoped that her lover would be the first to return, but she was disappointed, for he did not make his appearance till two days after Mr. Casnove, but he did not come empty-handed, for he brought her as a present a curious little ring, which he himself placed on her finger.

"Hullo, Mademoiselle! I haven't seen that before, that's something new," cried Fred the following morning at breakfast, catching sight of Miss Campbell's left hand, which she had been vainly trying to keep hidden. "Is that a present from the Frenchman?"

Poor Esther turned scarlet.

"No," she stammered, "it was given me by—by a friend."

"But not an Englishman," persisted Fred.

"What does it matter to you who gave it?" said Gerard, turning sharply on his brother.

"May I look at it nearer, Miss Campbell?" he said, quietly. "Oh, don't pray take it off! Rings should never be removed," and crossing to her side, he took her hand in his.

"This is a very good ring, a kind you seldom see in England, though often in Spain; probably your friend bought it there."

"I don't know, I'm sure," murmured Esther, and seeing her confusion, Gerard said no more, but continued talking to his brothers about Barbary apes, whom he explained were protected at Gibraltar by law.

To do Mr. Gerard Casnove justice, he had never intended matters to go so far. To test his marvellous powers of imitation, he had dressed up and acted, with a view to rousing Miss Campbell, and affording his brothers some amusement, by teasing her about the manner she had been taken in; but he never suspected that she would fall in love with him so readily; on the contrary, he had imagined she would have flown to Mrs. Casnove to pour out her story, and ask for protection. In the event of his practical joke proving a failure, he had at first kept it to himself, and now he refrained from letting Fred and John into the secret, for poor little Miss Campbell's sake, or perhaps more truly, because he was ashamed of his share in it. He now feared detection far more than Esther. Twice they had been surprised by servants coming up the area steps, when with admirable presence of mind he had shaken hands with her and said—

"You won't forget to tell Casnove I expect him early

on Thursday," and on the last occasion he had called out presumably to someone in the hall behind her, "Hurry up, John, old man, here's Miss Campbell standing entertaining me in a draught."

His acting now was no amusement, but a duty, and rather an irksome one; with all his heart he wished he had never begun this farce, but he saw no way out of it but to continue his love-making to the end; then, when he left, write her a letter purporting to come from a comrade of her lover's, enclosing a lock of black hair, and saying that Don Alonzo Carlos Alvarez had died fighting for his King, and that her name had been the last he had uttered; after that he surely might conclude that his tomfoolery was done with. He had tried preparing her for his departure, and she had clung to him with streaming eyes, and a frame convulsed with sobs. He would have tried to disgust her with him, but he was not used to women like Miss Campbell, and he saw that any unkindness would break her heart; after all, it did not take him long to put on a wig, moustache, and eyebrows, and cross the road, only to salute respectfully if he had another engagement, and to spend a few minutes with her if he had time, being tender and loving against his inclination and will.

Often he intended telling her that to-morrow he started for abroad, but at the last moment his heart would fail him, and he would decide to let her happiness continue a little longer, for, end soon enough for her he knew it must, and he was honourable enough to feel that he owed her some consideration, so he walked with her round the square or stood hidden in the deep recess of the portico when Mrs. Casnove thought she was in her room or doing something for the boys, and told her exciting stories and declared his passionate love.

Wonderful and terrible tales he told her of political disturbances, wars, brigands, bull-fights, the dangers to life, and of the terrible power of the Romish Church and the horrors of the Inquisition.

He narrated events, many of which had occurred a hundred years ago, but it was all the same to Miss Campbell,

who knew too little to detect any discrepancies; indeed, the one thing she had heard about Spain, strengthened her belief in his stories, for she remembered Mr. Gerard saying how little Spain had altered since the creation, for when Adam revisited the earth, and alighted there, after surveying the land all round, he exclaimed, "Dear old earth, it hasn't altered much since my time."

He told her of the hair-breadth escapes he himself had had till she clasped his arm in a passionate clasp, as though her love should shield him from all future harm.

She had never read any plays, so she did not know that half his flowery and gallant speeches were taken from those in which Mr. Casnove acted.

To her he was a hero, a demi-god, the one man the world contained—her noble Spanish Don.

Happiness is a great beautifier, and a new light shone in Esther's eyes, a colour took permanent hold of her cheeks, she thirsted for knowledge, to know more of the world in which she lived, to make herself more attractive to him, and to fit herself for the position she would one day hold. She could not think now how she had existed without him; she had not known she was unhappy, but she was sure she must have been, for now she lived in the glorious sunshine of his love and could sing all day from joyousness of heart.

"Mademoiselle must be in love with Gerard," said Fred; "have you noticed the change that has taken place since his arrival."

"I have, rather; but I don't believe it's Gerry. Supposing there were a Frenchman, after all; what a lark!"

"That's too wild a supposition to be true; more likely she's setting her cap at someone, or, rather, her hair; she's altered the style of that, I see, lately."

But the time now arrived when it was really necessary for Don Alonzo to take his departure, for Gerard's leave had nearly expired, and there were visits he had to pay in the country.

The "Good-bye!" was said at last, and Mr. Casnove, though cursing himself for his weakness and folly, soothed

her wild grief by assuring her that he would return—he could not tell her how soon—but some day.

He had been remorseful enough at times since his practical joke began, and Esther's white face now moved him, as he never before had been moved by human distress. He had no power of making redress, for it was not he himself that she loved, but a sham, a being who had never really existed. So low-spirited did these reflections make him that he found it necessary to resort to champagne in rather large quantities, and finish his evening at the theatre.

Miss Campbell, it is needless to say, did not indulge in any excitement to deaden her sorrow. She went early to bed, and tried to cry herself to sleep, but though she wept till her pillow was wet, she found it powerless to induce sleep. It must have been past midnight when she heard a sound that startled her. She sat up and listened, and a thrill of rapture ran through her. At the back of the house were the mews, where Fred and John used to go and see horses exercised, and also where Mrs. Casnové's coachman lived, and now a voice from there was singing to an accompaniment of some stringed instrument. She knew what it meant; she was being serenaded. Rising, she lighted a candle to show him she was aware of his gallantry. Then she listened, with tears coursing down her cheeks, to the clear, sweet voice, which rang with a passionate tremor, as he sang, as though from his inmost heart :

I could not leave thee, though I said,
Good-bye ! sweetheart, good-bye !

That ended, there came the "Spanish Cavalier," and after that a pause. Miss Campbell moved her candle about, waving it in her excitement, regardless of grease falling on the carpet, waving him a farewell. Again the voice arose in Balfé's "When Other Lips," and listening, she heard it getting fainter and fainter, till the last notes died away in the distance, and she knew that Don Alonzo had bidden her his last farewell. She still waved the candle, standing there in the cold, till a chill came over her—a chill that penetrated to her heart. She shivered, as

though at a dread of forthcoming evil ; but she had the ring, the precious ring ! to comfort her. Unreal and mysterious as all else might seem, that remained as an earnest of the joy to come, and to remind her of what had been.

"Did you hear that abominable singing last night, Miss Campbell?" asked Gerard at breakfast the next morning, his eyes fixed inquiringly on her face. "Some impudent fellow making that row near the house. If I could have found out where he was, I should have emptied a bucket of water over his head."

"No, Mr. Gerard—at least, yes ! I fancy—I believe, I did hear something," stammered poor Esther, her face like a peony.

"Perhaps some lover a serenading Mary-Ann," said Fred.

"It's like some of those love-sick Spanish fellows—proud as Lucifer as they are, they'll be humble enough to their loves," replied Gerard, while Esther's heart beat so rapidly she feared she should choke.

Then the day arrived when Gerard himself had to bid them farewell—a day when Mrs. Casnove cried, and Esther, too, from sympathy, and Gerard kissed his mother, and Miss Campbell, also—"by mistake," he said—and servants ran about the house, and piles of luggage covered with many labels were crowded on to cabs. And then the carriage, followed by the cabs, drove away, and after a few days things went back into much the same way that they had been before his arrival. Only one complete change had he wrought, and that was in Esther. He had lifted her out of her old world and shown her a new ; love had opened her eyes and improved her understanding, as no teacher, however clever, could have done. So, perhaps, Mr. Casnove's joke had some good in it after all.

CHAPTER IV.

DON ALONZO had never mentioned writing, and Miss Campbell's heart beat violently at the possibility of receiving a letter from him. Her agitation every morning at breakfast was almost palpable. She dreaded seeing a letter with a mysterious seal—dreaded, for fear of the remarks that might follow, and yet longed—oh! how intensely—to see the dear writing she had never seen. She used to lie awake thinking of all the sweet words that letter would contain, how she would for ever carry it next her heart. But, as days sped into weeks, and weeks into months, and it never came, trusting little Mademoiselle told herself he feared to write, either for her sake or from political reasons.

She had no photograph of him—she needed none. His image was too deeply engraven on her mind for her ever to forget. And so Esther went on improving herself, actually studying the fashion books and buying herself a black velvet gown and large black fan. She practised music and singing with greater zeal, and, if her style did not greatly improve, she certainly sang with much more expression.

The boys could not fail to notice the change that had taken place. She made eager inquiries about their world, in which she had never lived, and, though she worked as hard to please them, there was a new dignity in her bearing—rather quaint, I must admit—they had never observed before; for, unconsciously, she assumed a more important demeanour when she believed that, one day, she would be Donna, and mistress of those “castles in Spain.”

How could she ever fit herself for such a position?—how attend the Court of Spain, the proudest Court in all the world? Her heart would sink at the mere thought, then gain comfort by remembering that they would make

excuses for her as a foreigner, and *he* would be by her side to teach her what to do!

* * * *

Five years later, Mr. Gerard Casnove relieved the monotony of his honeymoon by relating to his wife some former instances in his life, and amongst them he told her what, up till then, had been his secret, of the trick he had played upon poor Miss Campbell.

"It was really very cruel of you to have made that poor girl love you and then desert her," said Mrs. Gerard, a handsome brunette, at the conclusion, looking at her husband with a glance that had not very much of reproach in it.

"Would it do to tell her the truth now?" he asked. "I always intended to write and say, *he*—I—Don Alonzo, you know, had been killed, and enclose a lock of black hair; but, upon my word, I was really afraid to do it, you see; she was awfully fond of me—loved me far better than you ever will, darling," he said, half in fun, and yet with a wistful look in his eyes, for he knew he spoke the truth, "and I was really afraid of what the consequences might be."

"I think, Gerry, if she were to learn the truth she would feel a loss far more terrible than if she heard Don Alonzo were dead. It would be enough to turn her brain, for it would be *too* humiliating to have been in love all these years with a shadow—'The folly of all follies,' as Tennyson calls it."

"Yet the Laureate might have found some excuse for one in Esther's place," said Gerard, thoughtfully; then continued, "I think silence undoubtedly best, were it not that the hope of her lover's return may make her refuse others. Strange as you may think it, she has had an offer from one man—some rich, retired tradesman they fell in with at an hotel at Bath. He told my mother that if he proposed to a pretty girl she would marry him for his money and wish him dead directly after. But Miss Campbell refused him, you know. I was glad, for my mother's sake, but not for my own or hers; but, you see,

even had I ever thought of sacrificing myself—which I can't say I ever did—it would have been quite useless, for she was not in love with me at all."

Young Mrs. Casnove's pretty lips curled disdainfully.

"You *could* not have thrown yourself away in such a manner, Gerry, unless you were raving mad. Why, considering the girl's disadvantages, I think she was very fortunate to have such a handsome lover dangling after her for so long; others would have been only too glad for such a flirtation. Yes, I certainly think it was a pretty considerable romance for such a plain girl."

It is well known among Mrs. Casnove's intimates that when she dies, her faithful companion, Miss Campbell, will have a very comfortable legacy.

In general appearance, Miss Campbell has much improved; but there is a sharpness in her face and an eagerness in her eyes which have only come of late years. She is a little eccentric, too, on some points. It is remarkably strange, as Mrs. Casnove says, that Esther, who cares nothing for society, should be so fond of sitting at the window and peering down the street. She has also a timid, yet eager, way of glancing up at the faces of tall men, as though she expected to meet with one she recognised; and her third peculiarity is a tendency to buy expensive meerschaum pipes; indeed, she will soon have quite a collection. Poor Mademoiselle!

So the long years have rolled on and still she waits. The retired wealthy tradesman made another appeal, but has now been finally dismissed. Miss Campbell has been saving money, though, these years, and if Mrs. Casnove's legacy is a substantial one, she will have no lack of offers then; but the answer will be just the same, for, with unswerving faithfulness, Esther clings to the words her lover hurriedly uttered, telling her that some day he would return. So, to be loyal to his memory if he be dead, or to receive him with open arms if he be alive, she waits—waits for footsteps that will never come, and will wait on till the end.

Miss Campbell never reads poetry. In former days she would scarcely have understood love poems, though,

I fancy, she might now ; but, if she did read, perhaps she would find her own wishes described in these lines—

“Dig my grave for two, with a stone to show it,
And on the stone write my name :
If he never comes, I shall never know it,
But sleep on all the same.”

Still, as Mrs. Gerard Casnove said, “It was a pretty considerable romance for such a plain girl.”

VIOLET WOOD.

What the Moon Revealed.

"A little, little grave; an obscure grave."—SHAKESPEARE.

It was rather a stiff climb up the old Worcestershire hill, and by the time we reached the top, Temple and I were hot and breathless with our exertions.

We were on a walking tour in the beautiful Vale of the Avon, and Temple—who in the last year or two had come to the front as one of the foremost landscape painters of the day—was sketching some of the exquisite views of hill and dale which lay around us.

"How far are we now from the old inn you mentioned?" asked Temple, lifting his hat from his brow with a sigh of relief.

"About a quarter of a mile; it lies there in the hollow," said I, pointing to a dip in the hill on the right. "Why, are you tired?" I added.

"No, not particularly; but I don't remember any inn about here," looking keenly at the prospect in front of him.

"It is hardly an inn in the proper acceptance of the term. I believe it was once the toll-gate house, when turnpike gates were one of the established orders of the day. Do you remember it? I thought you had never been here before."

"Oh! it is a long time ago, ten or twelve years, I should think," said Temple hurriedly, looking slightly confused.

"So long? Then no wonder you have forgotten the place."

"Forgotten!" he interrupted; "I remember every stick and stone, every gate and stile in every meadow," gazing round him. "Would that I didn't," he muttered, *sotto voce*.

Guessing that something painful was passing through the book of his memory, I said no more, and we walked

on in silence till we reached the inn, a small, one-storied building, with tiny latticed windows, and door standing invitingly open.

As we entered, and threw down our knapsacks, an old man, with a bright, cheery face like a Ribston pippin, came forward, and asked what might be our pleasure.

"Something to eat and drink ; your hills make it thirsty work walking," I replied.

"Aye, aye, so they does, Sir, but we can give you a cup of fine old cider, that'll beat your fizzy wine into fits ; rare old stingo it be !" and his lips seemed to curl inwards, as if he were tasting its flavour, "and a rasher of home-cured, with some poached eggs ; my missis be a fine 'and at poaching, if that'll suit you, maister."

"It will suit us down to the ground," said I, as I seated myself on the old-fashioned wooden settle which filled up one side of the room with its tall carved back, and outspreading arms, like wings on either side ; while Temple flung himself into a big sag-seated chair, covered with patchwork, and pulled out his beloved black briar pipe.

The meal did credit to our host's missus, and if "the proof of the pudding is in the eating," we proved it to the full, by the empty dishes left on the table, after we had satisfied our inner man.

We had nearly finished our second pipe, and I was fast subsiding into a state of *dolce far niente*-ism, when Temple—who had seemed unusually restless and irritable—suddenly exclaimed, "What a queer idea to put a hat under a glass case ; I wonder if it belonged to anybody special," getting up and peering into the case, which was placed on a bracket over the fireplace.

"Perhaps they took the idea from the admirers of 'Sartor Resartus.' I often think how grimly amused Carlyle would be, could he see his old hat reposing under that glass case in his house in Cheyne Row," said I ; "but what is that written on the label?"

"'A would-be murderer's hat!'" read Temple, in an astonished voice.

"And so 'e wud 'ave bin, if by the marcy of Provi-

dence I 'adn't 'ave stopped 'im," remarked old Jimmy Woollums, as he brought us our second mug of cider. "Many's the time I've bin blessed for that night's work," he added.

"How did you stop him, and who may he have been?" I queried, with not a little natural curiosity.

"Well, it's a bit of a story, Sir, and if, so be, as 'ow you'd like to 'ear it, maybe you'll not object to me a-sittin' down. I'm a trifle *roomaticky* betimes."

"By all means, sit down," I replied, "and let us have the history of the man and his hat."

And I looked at Temple with a smile, as much as to say, "We are in for a fine old rhodomontade."

To my surprise, he seemed lost in thought, and took no notice of my glance, so I turned to the old man, who had seated himself at the other end of the settle.

"It's nigh upon twelve years ago," he began, when Temple got up suddenly, and sat down in the window seat with his back to the light, "that this thing 'appened, and before the new line o' railway were laid, so the people 'ad to depend on the carrier's cairt, if they wanted to git from Persbeach to Apton, or if they 'ad any passels they wanted takin' to their friends. I druv the carrier's cairt then, and my boy Jim used to drop the passels at the 'ouses of our customers and 'elp the wimmin passengers to git in and out; for the steps were 'igh, and it were mighty okkard at times when ole Bess 'ad got her 'ead turned t'wards 'ome and wudna stan' still, an' many a neat ankle 'ave I seen in their nice white stockin's as they clumb up the step."

And the old fellow looked round with a chuckle.

"So you have an eye for a pretty foot," I remarked, laughingly.

"Right ye are for sure, Sir, and the gals be mostly 'clean in the pasterns' about 'ere. 'Owsomever, as I were a-sayin', it's about twelve years since this thing 'appened. It were on a lovely night in June, and I was on the road from Apton. We'd 'ad a good many passels to leave, and extry work, as theer were a big fair on in the next town, so it were gettin' on for ten, when we see the last milestone,

which were a bran' new white one, in front of us, about fifty yards a'ead."

"Then was it a moonlight night?" I asked, "or how could you see the milestone?"

"Well, it were moonlight, sartainly, but there was 'eavy clouds aloft, and now and again the light were dim, and the road a'most invisible when the moon were in a cloud. That was why the murderer wanted a lantern. But before we saw the light, Jim ses to me, 'e ses :

"'Hi! feyther, wot be that a-dodgin' about the milestone?'

"And when I lookt a bit for'ard, there were a figger a-jiggin' and a-wavin' its arms like mad; so I pulls ole Bess into the grass by the side of the road, and drives on slowly, and wot d'ye think it were, Sir?"

"The would-be murderer gone mad," said I.

"Na, na ; we 'adna cum up to the light then. Well, it were Willum Bettums—and a fine drunkard e' were, but 'e drank no beer after that night—and, if you'll believe me, 'e were that muzzy tight that 'e niver 'eard us cum behind 'im, and we 'eard 'im say to the milestone, 'Who be you?' Well, in course, there was no answer, and Willum e' squares up to the milestone and shakes 'is fists in its face, and 'e ses, ses 'e, 'Look' ere, my fine fellow, I've axed you wunst, and I'll ax you three times, and if you doan't answer me then I'll knock you into smithereens!' It were the funniest sight, and Jim and I nearly died with laffin' to 'ear 'im ax that milestone, 'Who be you?' three times."

"He must have been very drunk to imagine the milestone alive," I remarked.

"That 'e were, for sartain sure, though we thot, some 'ow, as 'e'd see that it were no man before 'itting out, but 'e didn't, and the next thing as we see were Bettums a-rammin' 'is knuckles agin that stone, and by gosh! 'e niver forgot it, for it smashed ivery one on 'em, and knocked 'im clean, 'ead over 'eels, on the grass. When Jim and I cud see for laffin, there were Willum, a-setten' on the ground, with 'is 'and to 'is mouth, a-roarin' like a bull of Bashum! 'Wot's up, Willum?' ses I, a-puttin'

me 'ead round the end of the cairt, 'wot bist 'owlin' for?' 'Oh! Woollums,' ses 'e, 'I'm done for this time, for sure,' and 'e gets up, and stares wildly round him. 'Not a bit on it,' ses I; 'cum and git into the cairt, and I'll drive you 'ome; yer missus will do the rest for ye.' Well, 'e clambered up, as well as 'e cud, for 'is knuckles was all a-bleedin', and 'e'd got a fairly rough old shakin' tryin' to knock a milestone down."

"I should think it knocked him sober as well," I exclaimed, as the old man stopped to take breath.

"And it did for sure; 'owsomever we didn't say any more to him then, knawin' Mrs. Bettums were 'andy at that, for she'd got the tongue of a reddy reckoner, as one might say, so we put ole Bess into a trot, and jogged on till we got to the top of the 'ill. I was jest tightenin' the reins to go down, when Jim ses, 'Look at that light in the wood, feyther. Wot can anybody be doin' theer at this time o' night?' 'They 'm up to no good,' ses I, a-standin' up in the cairt, and lookin' down into the wood which skirted the road for 'alf a mile or so on the left; jest then the moon shone out bright, and I cud see, down in the 'ollow, the figger of a man, movin' up and down as if it were diggin'.

"'Be they poachers, feyther?' ses Jim, in a whisper.

"'Dunno, I'm sure, but wotever they be, I'll 'ave a look at 'em. Take the reins, Jim,' ses I, and I got down, and I clambered over a gate—'ard work it were too, for it were a 'igh one—then I worked me way, very gingerly, on the inside of the 'edge, close to the bank, as I didn't want to step on a twig, or make a noise to disturb 'em. The moon went in agen, and it were pesky dark at times, but I cud see the glint o' light ivery now and agen. At last I got within a few feet of the figger, and wot d'ye think 'e were a-doin'?"

"Setting a gin, I suppose, to trap some unwary creature," I said, rather impatient of the old man's prolixity.

"'E wud a-trapped a little critter if I 'adn't a-stopped 'er! Na, 'e were a-diggin' a grave, and it jest made me blood run cold to see it. This 'll 'ave to be stopped

thinks I, but 'ow can I fritten 'im away? If 'e thinks theer be only one, may'ap 'e may turn round and fetch me one on the cop with the spade. So I puts me fingers and thumbs to me lips, and gives a most unairthly yell, enou' to waken the dead, and shouts out, "'Ere, Dick, Tom, catch the murderin' villin!" Well, 'e niver stopped to look behind 'im, but dashed through the wood and across the fields like blazes, and I knew it were no good to foller 'im; so I jest run for'ard, grabbed 'is 'at—that very one you see there—and 'is lantern. I didn't stop for the spade, which 'e dropped in the grave when he bolted, and made for the cairt as fast as my legs would carry me."

"What a fool to bolt like that and leave the proofs of his guilt behind him," I exclaimed.

"Na doubt 'e were a fule, but don't Shakespeare say somethin' about conscience makin' cowards of people? Any'ow it made a coward of 'e. When I gets back to the cairt I 'eld up the lantern to look at the 'at, and when I saw the name inside I fairly 'ooted, for it was the name of the squire's son, Maister Cotterill. 'Owsomever, it were no good sayin' anything then, so I took the reins and druv on."

"Did you know Mr. Cotterill?" I asked.

"I knowed 'im for the biggest rip about these pairts, and 'e a-goin' on for nigh thirty. Theer wasn't a gal as 'e didn't make love to, and the last we'd 'eard 'e were a-foolin' round were the young 'ooman wot taught the passon's childern—a prutty little thing, with great blue eyes, black wavy hair, and a skin like a chaney doll, all pink and white; eh! she were prutty; s'pose that's wot took 'is fancy."

"What was her name?" asked Temple, abruptly.

"It were Miss Marsden, Sir; may 'appen you knawed the young lady?" looking at him suspiciously.

"Your description reminded me of some one I knew years ago," replied Temple, with an attempt at indifference; "but go on with your story, please."

"Well, we jogged on till we cum to the Three Springs, about a mile from 'ome, when, jest as we turned the

corner, who should we a'most run over than this very young lady, a-goin' in the direction o' the wood. This 'll niver do, thinks I; the murderin' villin may cum back, a'ter all, and do for 'er; so out I jumps, and without stoppin' to think ses, 'It's very late for you to be out, Miss.' She flushed up a bit and ses, shortly, 'That's my business.' 'Na doubt, but you maunt go any further along this yer road to-night,' ses I, a-placin' meself in front of 'er. 'You're a very rude man,' ses she; 'please to let me pass.' I saw she were gettin' angry, so I ses, sharply, 'D'ye knaw wot your young man were up to jest now?' 'How dare you?' ses she. 'What young man do you mean?' gettin' redder and redder. 'I mean Squire Cotterill's son,' ses I; 'e's a-diggin' a grave in Tiddesley Wood; leastways, 'e were till I frittened 'im away. If you doan't believe me 'ere's 'is 'at and the lantern 'e were a-diggin' by.' She gave a little cry and went as white as death. 'Oh! Mr. Woollums, don't try to frighten me like this,' says she, a-grabbin' me by the arm; 'it can't be true.' And she bu'st out cryin' and sobbed as if 'er 'eart wud break.

" 'Tell me,' says I, 'was you a-goin' to meet him to-night?' She nodded 'er 'ead, for she cudn't speak—'er teeth was all a-chatterin' and she shook all over.

" 'Well, then, it's a blessed good job as I seed 'im,' ses I, 'or a dead corpse you'd be by this time.'

" 'Oh! but it must be a mistake,' she cried. 'He was to meet me at the top of the hill with a carriage and drive me to his father's house. He has told him we are married and he has promised to receive me.' And she wrung 'er 'ands, an' lookt as if she'd faint.

" 'So you're married, are you?' ses I. 'Well, I'm mighty glad to 'ear it.' And I lookt down at 'er figger, which weren't as slim as it 'ad bin, by no means.

" 'We were married six months ago, and he has promised, week after week, to take me home—and now you tell me this. Oh! what shall I do? What shall I do?' And the poor girl lookt as if she was going to die.

" 'Well, Miss, it do look very 'spicious! Theer beant any kerridge on the 'ill, and if so be as 'e meant to bring

one, why should 'e be a-diggin' of a grave at this time o' night, and then run away when I 'ollowed at 'im? Men doan't dig graves at night for fun, and you mun own that it do look black agen him.' "

"The damned scoundrel!" muttered Temple, dropping his beloved pipe suddenly with a crash.

"'But he couldn't be so cruel as to want to kill me. Oh! if I could only see him, it would be all right,' she cried. 'He loves me so much,' and she looked at me so piteously that I felt, if I'd got me 'and on 'is neck, I could 'ave scragged the villin.

"'P'raps so,' ses I, 'but I 'eard in the town to-day that 'e's going to marry Lady Barbara, the Earl of Draycourt's daughter, and the lawyers be drawin' up the settlements; so if you be married, as you say, 'e either means to commit bigamy, or to put you out o' the way; 'e can't 'ave two wives, legal.'

"I thowt it best to be plain, for I cud see she were a-ankerin' to go on up the 'ill.

"'What!' ses she, 'marry Lady Barbara'—and she giv' a little click in 'er throat, and fell agen me in a dead swoond.

"I picked 'er up, and hefts 'er into the cairt, and Jim 'eld 'er up, and took care on 'er; she were no more trubble than a babby, and when we got 'ome, my missis she put 'er to bed, and axed no questions, for the poor thing seemed dazed like.

"The next morning, without sayin' a word ta anybody, I just saddled ole Bess, and went and told the squire the same as I've told you. 'E were a decent ole gentleman, tall and dignified, and me 'eart sank in me boots when the butler showed me into the libry, but it were no good 'emmen' and 'awin', so I up and telled 'im all—that I 'ad 'is son's 'at with 'is name inside, and 'is lantern, and if 'e didn't see 'is way to receive graciously 'is son's wife, I should make it my business to make things pretty 'ot for the young squire.

"I felt sorry for the ole gentleman, for 'is face went as white as ashes, and 'e put up 'is 'and, and ses, 'I think you mean well, but I shall be glad if you'll say no more;

I will call on the young lady this afternoon ' ; which 'e did, in his grand ole-fashioned kerridge, and took 'er away with 'im to 'is big 'ouse, Rednor Hall."

"And what became of the Squire's son?" asked Temple, eagerly.

"Killed in a steeplechase; 'is father wudn't 'ave anything to do with 'im after the tale of 'is wickedness cum out, but they brought 'im 'ome, and berried 'im in the family vault, quite respectful! The ole squire died soon after 'is son was killed, and so the little babby cum into all the estate, and lives with 'is mother at the ole 'all now."

"It was lucky for the young lady that you were on the road that night, or no doubt she would have been murdered," I said. "Where on earth are you off to?" I added, in astonishment to Temple, who had risen hastily, put on his soft round hat, and, with his stick in his hand, was making for the door.

"To Rednor Hall, to see Lily Marsden. I—I mean Mrs. Cotterill," stammered Temple, with a heightened colour. "Wait till I come back, old man—I won't be long."

And he started off along the sunny road, and his quick strides soon took him out of our view.

"That's curious now," said the old man. "Spose 'e knew the young lady years ago," looking at me, inquisitively.

"It seems like it," I answered, "or he would scarcely march off in that fashion. He is evidently gone to renew his acquaintance with her."

"I *dis*remember now," said Woollums, knitting his brow in thought, "that there was a talk of a young fellow, a hartist, a friend of the 'ed maister at the Grammar School, bein' sweet on this little governess, and 'ow he were awful cut up when the tale cum out, and left the place at wunst. P'raps this be 'e."

And "'e" it proved to be; for just as the sun was setting in a golden glory, and the sky was flushed with brilliant opaline tints of rosy pink and faint emerald green—while I forgot the flight of time in watching the lights and shadows over the Malvern Hills—a groom appeared, driving a spanking roan in a high dog-cart.

He brought me a letter from Temple, written rather hurriedly, from which I gathered he was going to remain at Rednor Hall for a short time, and asking me to join him there. He also enclosed a dainty little note from Mrs. Cotterill, inviting me to join my friend; but, remembering the old adage that "two's company and three's none," I decided to decline the invitation and returned to London the next day.

A few months afterwards, at the quaint old church of St. Agnes-on-the-Hill, I had the pleasure of acting as best man to my friend Temple; and when I caught the glance of intense love which lit up his usually sombre face as he saw his bride enter and the look of quiet happiness with which she met his gaze, I felt there was every chance of their future being a bright and happy one, and blessed the lucky accident which had made us choose Worcestershire instead of Devonshire for our walking tour that summer.

RATCLIFF HOARE.

A Visit to Paradise.

DURING a recent visit to Anseremme, I often wondered why it is that that very fascinating little spot should still remain in unmerited obscurity and be so seldom visited ; for it is charmingly situated at the foot of a steep hill on the banks of the Meuse, the surrounding scenery is beautiful and impressive, and it is a centre whence so many pleasant excursions radiate that its attractions are manifold. Besides, it is within a mile of Dinant,* which is certainly the most extraordinary and original little town on the Continent, owing to the peculiar colouring of its houses ; for, while some of them are painted pink, blue, yellow, or red, according to the fancy of the various owners, others, again, are a bright pea-green ! This imparts such a unique appearance to the place that, when you see it first, you fancy that what you are gazing at must be an architectural travesty and not a town proper. And yet, fantastic though it may be, it is decidedly pleasant to the eye, and seems quite in keeping with the surrounding scene, which is full of quaint and picturesque effects ; for the grand amphitheatre of mountains by which the town of Dinant is enclosed, the terraced gardens rising almost to their summits, and the rich clusters of trees on their slopes, combine to form a very charming *ensemble*, while the sombre masses of rock which obtrude here and there amid the verdure, give boldness to the otherwise highly cultivated landscape, and impart to it the touch of wildness which was all that it required.

* In going from Anseremme to Dinant, you have to pass the celebrated *Rocher Bayard*—a colossal monolith which rises sheer from the river, and which has played a very important *rôle* in the history of the Dinantais, by whom it is called the "Giant of the Meuse."

Another note of interest is struck at Dinant by the wonderful winding staircase, cut in the rock, which leads to the citadel* and renders the summit of the cliffs accessible to the inhabitants. The ascent is steep and toilsome—there can be no doubt of that; and yet, when the top is reached, you feel indemnified for the fatigue it imposes by the fine view which you obtain of the magnificent panorama spread out before you. At your feet is the old church, whose steeple you almost seem to touch; away to the right and left extends the town, though you are such a long way above it that only a faint, far-off murmur of sound reaches your ear. Just before you is the Meuse, laughing in the sunshine as it goes on its glad way through the verdant valley, and thence onwards between the lofty escarpments of limestone rock which occasionally hem it in on both sides; and all around lie fair, hanging gardens and groves of hazel and linden trees—the latter being sprinkled with ancient castles and pretty modern châteaux, in such close proximity to each other as to fully illustrate the charm of contrast.

Dinant is a bright, brisk, busy little town, too full of movement and variety as well as colour. And yet, curious to say, on the opposite side of the narrow river and quite close to it, stands the dead city of Bouvignes. This is a peculiarly interesting place—one of the most ancient of all the mediæval towns—and it is strange to think that it was once celebrated for its sieges, and rang continuously with the clash of arms and the din of war. For, at the present day, though still standing it is practically extinct, and the sensation produced by its grass-grown streets and deserted alleys is analogous to that which is experienced in a churchyard. Indeed, the whole place is dream-like and shadowy to the last degree. And some of the ancient houses (dating from the seventh century) present such a very ghostly appearance that one almost expects to see phantom shapes issuing from their grim doors and

* The present citadel (built in 1821) has had nothing to do all its life but looks picturesque. Its predecessor, on the contrary, had a most chequered career; and, though Louis XIV. began to besiege it when he came to Dinant in 1675 with Madame de Maintenon, owing to its strength and strategic importance the fort did not fall until 1703.

gliding along the mouldering streets which they line.

But, of course, this spectral charm imparts much additional interest to the spot, and also to the ruined castle of Crèvecœur, which rises, gaunt and grim, on a hill at the back of the town. Crèvecœur, which was erected in the fourteenth century, is a stately ruin, though it certainly is not a beautiful one. For the ravages of time have not been atoned for by any mellowing influences, and owing to the absence of ivy and other creeping plants, it looks singularly bald and bare. However, it would almost seem that this omission was made purposely on the part of nature. For there can be no doubt that the old building looks far more formidable in its stern, harsh, uncompromising squareness of outline than if it were softened and toned down by leaves and grasses. Viewed in this light, therefore, such a ruin as Crèvecœur is independent of the abstraction we call beauty, and is able to fulfil its functions perfectly without it. For as it stands there, solitary, dismantled and deserted, so close to the busy, populous world, and yet so far apart from it, it arrests the attention of everybody and most efficiently plays its double *rôle* of being a striking feature in the shifting present and a record of the immutable past.

One of the pleasantest excursions to be made from Anseremme is to the Fonds de Leffe, a deep defile enclosed by walls of naked rocks, which, once a solid block, must have been cleft in twain by some great convulsion of nature, and which still look as stern and threatening as the most ardent lover of wild and austere scenery could desire. At the entrance of the defile you see the ruins of the Abbaye de Leffe, one of those charming old remains in which the spell of romance is added to the interest of history; and as you pursue your way, about a mile and a-half further on, you come to the celebrated *Pas de Charlemagne*, called the *Cherau*, which, in the language of the country, means a road traced by the wheels of a chariot. At a short distance from this there is the Miraculous Fountain of Charlemagne, who is accredited with possessing the same hydraulic power as Moses. For on one occasion, by

striking the rock with his lance, he brought forth a copious supply of water, wherewith he was able to save the lives of his soldiers who were dying of thirst at the time. But it was only to be expected that supernatural powers should thus be attributed to him. The deeds of such a man, in whom poets found an inspiration and romancists a hero, must inevitably crystallise into legend, as they did. For his exploits were preserved by tradition; and, as time rolled on, and all the coarser parts of his career faded into the dim past, his achievements naturally loomed forth so grandly from their shadowy background, that they gradually assumed a marvellous form and were so encrusted with fable that he ultimately became a legendary hero as well as a great historic fact.

Another pleasant walk is to the Château Walzin, the path to which for some distance lies along the banks of the river. But after a while it takes you to that lovely part of the valley where the Meuse and the Lesse join, and where the scenery becomes so fine that the region has acquired the name of *La Petite Suisse*. The inhabitants are very proud of this title—which might indeed be called the reward of merit. For from Anseremme to near Port St. Jean, where the union of the rivers takes place, there is a greater breadth in nature's treatment; the picture is drawn in bolder, more majestic lines, and the details are so striking and imposing that the whole scene is full of poetic grandeur as well as beauty.

At Pont-à-Lesse the cavern region begins, and extends thence for a long way. The peculiar convolutions of the limestone strata hereabout seem to lend themselves easily to the development of those marvellous grottoes to which so much interest attaches. For while all are curious and excite wonder, some are so beautiful that they might indeed be called Nature's secret chambers of imagery. Besides, in several of them, stone implements have been discovered belonging to the undated past, and fashioned by men who lived when the world was young. And one called La Naulette was found to contain a human jaw, which is said to be coeval with the dawn of human life on the globe.

From Pont-à-Lesse onward to Walzin the ascending path which is called "*La Promenade Classique de Walzin*," is so charming that in every sense of the word it leads up to the crowning beauty of the scene, which is the Château itself. Before you reach the latter, however, you come to an ancient mill-house, which, with the weir, the overhanging rocks, and the rich foliage around it, makes a very pretty, old-fashioned picture; and there you get into a boat and are ferried across the River Lesse to the meadows on the opposite bank, where a finer view of Château Walzin is obtained. But though the castle does certainly look superb from those pleasant fields, I found that it was from the water, and while immediately under the building that I could form the most correct estimate of the tremendous height of the rock which sustains it, and which rises from the river as straight as a wall. Indeed, as I gazed upwards from that lowly position, my admiration of the stately pile was unbounded. And as I catalogued all the features of the scene—the romantic beauty of the situation, its diversified outline, and its embowering woods—I came to the conclusion that though other castles in the country may possess more historic interest, Château Walzin is undoubtedly the most beautiful in this region. I must not omit to mention, too, that some of the windows look down from a dizzy height on the dark water beneath; and that once upon a time a love-lorn demoiselle precipitated herself from one of them into the Lesse, because some faithless Phaon had forsaken her. But this tragedy occurred in the good old times when love was in the ascendant, and before romance had been steam-engined out of existence. At the present day, life is no doubt as prosaic at Walzin as elsewhere. Indeed, it must necessarily be so. For the castle (which dates from the thirteenth century) has been restored and converted into a modern dwelling, and is now occupied by an individual possessing the extremely unheroic name of Bruggman!

About two miles further on, you come to the quaint hamlet of Chaleux, where there is a large isolated rock called "*La Chandelle*," of which the little place is very

proud, and in whose reflected light it shines. Indeed, though the approach to this strange spot necessitates some very rough walking, the physiognomy of the whole scene is so peculiar that in this instance—to reverse the old saying, the candle is worth the game. For Chaleux consists of a circular sweep of grey, ghostly-looking rocks, with the green, mysterious river flowing at their base, and a handful of red-roofed cottages sheltering beneath the cliffs on an abrupt curve of the shore. It is thus full of strong contrasts as well as striking characteristics, and is what might be called a ready-made picture of great beauty. But, alas for it, no artist comes this way to reproduce it on his canvas.

The Meuse Valley is the prelude to the Semois, which is much more beautiful. Properly speaking, the tour through the latter begins at Monthermé, but you pass several places *en route* which deserve special mention. The first of these is Fumay, which looks very alluring as you approach its vicinity, and still more so when you stop and visit it. For the little town stands on a small peninsula which is washed by the Meuse, and girdled by lofty hills. And on its left it is sheltered by a grove of beautiful linden trees, which forms a very charming feature in the scene. The houses at Fumay are scattered about so very irregularly that they look as if they were trying to humour the extremely uneven soil on which they stand. And in their midst rises a strange-looking modern church of such a bright yellow tint that it is quite out of harmony with the subdued grey tone of its surroundings, and strikes the eye of even the most unobservant beholder as a glaring chromatic defect. But then Fumay is a unique little place in every respect. For example, in its steep, picturesque streets there are steps cut in the natural rock which impart a most primitive air to it. And in a pretty promenade, planted with trees, there is the Chapelle St. Roche, which contains a nail of such sanctity that it has been almost as much worn away by the kisses of the devout as the toe of Saint Peter at Rome.

Revin comes next, and on the way to it the mountain

of Malgrétout is pointed out to the traveller as being the scene and title of one George Sand's novels. Revin looks as if it were in half-mourning, owing to the prevailing grey hue of the slated houses, and also to the sombre air which pervades the place. Nevertheless, it is well worth seeing, and especially so from an artistic point of view. For the old houses on the quay, striped with black beams, form a study in themselves. And it seems as if it must have been with a view to effect, and in the interests of art, that the ancient Dominican convent, the cemetery, and a ruined church, have all been placed on the top of a steep hill on one side of the town. It is, however, from the slatework that Revin more particularly takes its tone; and that is really most curious, as many of the houses look as if they were built of lava, and those whose walls as well as their roofs are thickly covered with slate, present a very unusual appearance.

But the culminating point of interest in this neighbourhood is the wonderful old Château of Montcornet, which, though it lies quite out of the beaten track, is little known and never visited, well repays the trouble of the *détour* which has to be made in order to reach it. Indeed, I have rarely seen so splendid a feudal remain.* And, while the whole structure and architectural details demonstrate that it was a princely residence in other days, even now there is something remarkable about the old pile, one part of which is absolutely startling. For there is a large square tower, grim and dark, which contains a great round skylight, so curiously like a Cyclopean eye that it appears as if the castle kept this sinister and terrible optic ever open, and always fixed watchfully and balefully on the little town of Renwez, which lies beneath and which it dominates.

On my way to Montcornet, too, I saw many things that interested me, and notably the famous *Dames de Meuse* from the most favourable point of view. These ladies are a magnificent mass of black rocks, tapestried

* I was unable to glean any particulars regarding this most interesting and stately ruin, beyond the fact that it was rebuilt in the sixteenth century after having been demolished by the Duc de Nevers.

here and there with tufts of moss and brambles, whose soaring summits are boldly and clearly silhouetted against the sky, while their feet rest in the water. Owing, however, to their height and position, and especially to the ominous darkness of their hue, they not only look aggressive and formidable at all times, but as soon as daylight begins to fade they assume such a forbidding, eerie aspect that one no longer wonders at the ghostly reputation they have gained ; nor does it seem at all surprising that they should be (as they are) the scene or theatre of so many gruesome and blood-curdling tales.

Howbeit, these startling legends in no wise interfere with the pleasure of a visit to the locality. On the contrary, they increase it ; for there can be no doubt that every scene becomes more interesting by being connected with history—fabulous or otherwise—and acquires a superadded charm from having a web of human association spread over it.

It is at Monthermé that the tardy union of the Meuse and the Semois is at length effected, though, after so many delays, caprices, and meanderings on the part of the latter river, that it hardly seems to be a consenting party to the transaction. The scenery at Monthermé is bold and grand, and the engirdling hills, which are clothed with forest trees and dotted with white houses, form themselves into enchanting pictures at every turn. Moreover, though the town, which stands on both sides of the river and is connected by an imposing bridge, does not contain anything very noticeable or remarkable itself, it lies in the heart of such a delicious valley that one feels quite satisfied with it, and does not want anything more than what it has to give. Meanwhile, the beauty of this valley increases as you proceed, and, while following the course of the Semois, you observe that it is a river which exhibits much diversity and originality of character. For instance, when it first starts into being at Arlon, and during the early part of its career, it glides along smoothly and tranquilly, and sometimes so noiselessly as well, that its soft murmur can scarcely be heard. At this part, too, it always displays a great readiness to reproduce the bright

influences of sky and air, and likewise to reflect faithfully the many fair objects on its banks. After a while, however, its mood changes, and, burying itself in the deep recesses and sombre defiles of the Ardennes, it indulges in the most tortuous courses for some time as it flows past beetling rocks and through gloomy forests. But presently another alteration takes place, and it becomes everything by turns—now foaming and angry, now expanding into still, lake-like sheets of water, and again growing as fretful and impatient at being arrested in its flow as if it were a living thing, until, after a chequered career of 190 kilometres, it at last joins its fate with the Meuse, as has been said.

The two prettiest places between Monthermé and Herbeumont are Hautesrivières and Bohan, both of which should be visited by every traveller who comes this way. Indeed, albeit the former is confronted with, and stands quite close to, a hill called "The Coast of Hell," it looks most inviting at a short distance. And though when you enter it you find that the laws of sanitation and cleanliness have not been as well attended to as might be desirable, there is a pathetic aspect about the little place which bespeaks indulgence and induces you to overlook its defects in consideration of the very undeniable attractions that it possesses.

As for Bohan, which is the first Belgian town after you pass the French frontier, it is sheltered by and under the immediate protection of the *Dame de Semois*, the highest mountain in the country. Some prehistoric interest attaches to it also, from the circumstance of its containing a rocky cavern called "The hole of the wild man." And with its tobacco plantations, and the peculiar adjustment of its houses, which rise in tiers on the hill-side, it quite deserves to be called an incipient Switzerland, and is certainly one of the fairest spots in the Ardennes.

Herbeumont is the recognised centre of excursions in the Semois Valley; and in the interests of those who love sport as well as scenery, it must be mentioned that excellent hunting and fishing are to be had in the neighbour-

hood. The town, too, is dominated by an old castle, from whose ramparts a fine panoramic view of the immediate surroundings is obtained, and also of the dark, mysterious *Bois de Dansau* on the opposite side of the river—which is a most exciting spot, owing to its ghostly reputation.* But, of course, the interest attaching to Herbeumont arises from the fact of its being the way to Paradise, which was the objective point of my tour. In short, the attraction of the name was so great that it drew me towards it like a loadstone, raising my expectations to the very highest degree. And yet I was doomed to disappointment, as will be seen. On the morning after my arrival at Herbeumont I set out for this alluring spot in a boat. The little craft was procured at a mill-house near Chiny, and soon after starting I found myself gliding through deep defiles which at that early hour were so solitary and soundless that even Nature herself seemed hardly awake, and everything was still as if it were listening. But it was a most enjoyable row. For Chiny is very romantically situated; and the passage from it to the pretty village of Lacuisine, and thence on to Paradise is a marvellous bit of river scenery, in which softness and wildness are delightfully blended, and where the sombre hue of the grey limestone rocks is brought into strong and beautiful relief by the masses of luxuriant foliage which cling to them. It is in truth a fairy scene, full of charm and unwritten poetry. But, strange to say, this charm ceases when the point of Chiny has been doubled. And great was my disenchantment when I found that the particular part called Paradise merely consists of a cluster of barren crags which crown a lonely headland, and which are so destitute of vegetation, and so void of all form and comeliness that anything less like heaven could not be imagined. It was thus a very decided case of anticlimax and disillusionment. But still, notwithstanding the disappointment, and collapse of my expectations, I

* According to local tradition, one of the Counts of Herbeumont had his neck twisted by the enemy of mankind in the *Bois de Dansau*; and because his crimes were of a very aggravated nature, he not only still haunts the wood, but frequently, after nightfall, the dread tragedy is re-enacted there, and the most horrible and unearthly noises are said to issue from it.

could not regret having come to visit it; because the journey thither was so uniquely pleasant, and I had discovered so many beauty-spots on the way.

E. V. BEAUFORT.

THE STAGE.

THEATRICAL matters at this season of the year always begin to get very uneventful. The plays put on early in the season have, long ere now, been weighed in the balances, and those which have been found wanting have been replaced by more worthy successors, while those which "hit" from the commencement are still enjoying their well-merited prosperity. During the past month, I have visited nearly everything in turn—"The White Heather," at Drury Lane; "The Medicine Man," at the Lyceum; "Julius Cæsar," at Her Majesty's; "The Little Minister," at the Haymarket; the much-criticised "Conquerors," at St. James's; "La Poupee," at the Prince of Wales's; and so on through the whole gamut, and found practically no change from previous visits. I have even journeyed to Croydon, where I find strong companies are well upholding the popularity of one of our smartest and most comfortable suburban theatres.

* * * *

"The Little Minister" celebrated its 200th performance on May 7th; firstly by a crowded house, and secondly by a supper to the company, when the popular author of the piece, Mr. J. M. Barrie, made a delightful speech.

* * * *

If "The Conquerors" comes off before the end of the season—an event which seems not altogether improbable—I hear that Mr. George Alexander will produce "The Ambassador," a new four-act modern play by John Oliver Hobbes.

* * * *

I also am informed that Mr. Forbes Robertson, Mrs. Patrick Campbell and their company will appear in a new play, in June, at a West-End theatre.

THE PLAYGOER.

CURRENT LITERATURE.

The passing away of one of the most notable figures in English history brings some curious reflections to one's mind. It is a sign of the times that a few words in large type on a placard make us haste to buy the latest editions of the newspapers to acquaint ourselves as nearly as may be with the present condition of affairs which are happening many hundreds of miles away, and now, no sooner does Death come to deprive us of a prominent actor in the Drama of History than the streets are teeming with various "lives" of the great man. To say "In the midst of life we are in death" could never be said with more applicability. Every day that passes over the great man's head, sees minor historians jotting down the events worthy of note, so that if the great man should suddenly expire, his biography—more or less accurate—would almost simultaneously be in the hands of the public. Independently of politics, the late William Ewart Gladstone had a great influence on current literature. His was a classic mind, and a mind capable of appreciating all that was sound in literature. On many subjects, too, his was a master mind. Much of the literature of to-day will tomorrow be the literature of the past, dead and forgotten, but Mr. Gladstone's name will be remembered with the literature that lives. He will be an enduring example of what a man may achieve by careful study and a proper exercise of his mental faculties. He dies in very truth a Grand Old Man, mourned by a nation, and as much by his erstwhile political foes as by political friends.

One of the books published during the past month is likely to have a very large sale. It is written by Mr. G. Firth Scott, and bears the title, "The Last Lemurian." It is exceedingly well written, and belongs to that class of books which, once you take them up you cannot put down until you have read right through to the last page. The idea of the plot does not suggest itself as being absolutely original—what idea is!—but the skilful way in which it is handled excites one's admiration. The plot is, of course, laid in Australia—we say of course, because one has by this time begun to associate Mr. Firth Scott's name with some of our truest ideas of Australian life. (In this connection it will be no doubt remembered that Mr. Firth Scott has contributed a good deal to the pages of *BELGRAVIA* during the last twelve months; notably, by his serial story, "Nerelle," which terminated in the December issue.) The search for gold provides the theme, and from this starting-point issues a series of adventures of a most startling character. There is much that is highly improbable, but the clever way in which everything is expressed lends quite a reality to the improbabilities. The heroes, through various agencies, obtain possession of vast wealth, and at the same time are brought face to face with the relics of a vast civilisation of an intensely remote period of the earth's history. It is the extraordinary developments which follow this discovery that so enchain the reader's attention, and it is the clever and logical reasoning put into the mouth of the fatter which makes the reader follow so closely the theory of life and love so emphatically expressed by the way the plot is made to develop. Mr. Firth Scott is the author of "The Track of Midnight," "Sophonisba," and a great number of short stories, but nothing is so likely to conduce to his popularity and fame as an author as "The Last Lemurian," which is published by James Howden.

BELGRAVIA

JULY, 1898.

St. Philip's-on-the-Sea : A Novel.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CURATE'S REBUKE.

It was some few days before Dolly Lamley could convey to his friend Coleson the very strong conviction to which Mary Waddell had come as to the true state of affairs between Maud Berrington and her noble suitor ; and in the meantime, as we have seen, the Curate had had the last shreds of hope snatched from him by the cruel news his other confidant, Major Pilton, had so unfeelingly imparted. Coleson was not unaware of the friendship which had sprung up between the object of his high aspirations, and the charming girl who had taken such a firm hold upon the volatile affections of the handsome Dolly. Dolly was quite sure that what Mary said must be right, the wisdom of that sensible little woman having made a great impression upon the easy-going, and not seldom foolish, young officer. Nor did Coleson himself see any reason to doubt the justice of Mary's inductions. Not only had Maud strenuously denied the soft impeachment before the feminine Sanhedrim over which Mrs. Argle presided, but in private confidence with her friend, and when she could have no reason for hiding the truth, she had very strongly expressed herself as to Lord Livermoor's pretensions, and had intimated in quite the plainest of English that she would have nothing whatever to do with the enamoured nobleman, his nobility and his wealth to the contrary notwithstanding. Those arrant gossips, then—to wit, Mrs.

Laver and the Major, were wrong, in spite of their disturbing certainty and their insistence; the great man's attentions were—so Coleson imagined—without doubt bestowed upon Mrs. Berrington, and the lovely Maud was still open to an eligible offer. The other objections, however, still held good; "Coleson's Sympathetic Pill" was still very evidently to the fore, while the notice the potent Lord Livermoor had bestowed upon the Woodville folk, the fact that Mrs. Berrington and her daughter had actually been living for a short period in regions of quite the most exalted aristocracy; these facts would certainly not dispose the honourable dame who led St. Philip's society to look with favour upon the alliance the Curate proposed for her handsome daughter. And if it were indeed true that Maud's mother was, as Coleson imagined, to be raised to the Peerage, with the style and title of Lucinda, Countess of Livermoor, there was still less chance of the matrimonial bliss his soul hungered after; for, in the lofty sphere in which Maud would then move, a connection with the too ubiquitous Pill would be an absurd impossibility. Still, it was as balm to this wounded soul of his to know that, at any rate, his beloved was still roving in maiden meditation, and fancy free, unless certain thrilling hopes of his had, as he almost dared to think, some ground of certainty.

"I am sure I cannot tell how to advise you, Charles," said the Curate's mother, to whom he had resorted for help in the untying of these complicated knots; "if you were *sure* that Maud Berrington really cared for you, I should tell you to speak to her at once, and put an end to the suspense which is worrying you so dreadfully."

"Unfortunately I am not at all sure on that point; very far from sure, in fact," said Coleson, musingly, "she has always been kind—but then she is kind and good to every one—and sometimes I have fancied—still, it is more than probable it was nothing but my idiotic fatuity—and when one comes to think, why on earth should she bestow any thoughts upon me, of all men in the world?"

"And why shouldn't she, pray? You are absurdly humble-minded, Charles. I am sure any girl would——"

"A parent's partiality, mother mine," laughed the Curate; "no, I certainly have no reason to—or, at any rate, the very faintest of reasons——"

"Then why did she refuse Lord Livermoor? Such a splendid marriage, too; there must certainly be some one in the way, and I believe that someone is my son."

"We don't know that she did refuse him. For my part, I still think it is Mrs. Berrington the great man distinguishes with his attentions; and in that case my chance would be a poor one indeed. Lady Livermoor's daughter and the Sympathetic Pill are incongruous elements," and the Curate smiled grimly at the idea.

"You are too absurd about that, Charles, as I often tell you. I know you are very much in earnest; you will not be happy till you know the best or the worst, and you had much better seek an early opportunity, and speak to Maud."

"Mrs. Berrington may have very strong objections. I have a sort of pride of my own, too; and the long and the short of it is, I think I shall speak to Maud's mother first. It is the more honourable course to take."

"If you were sure of the girl, I should say, do so; but you place yourself in rather a ludicrous position if you get the mother's consent, and if, after all, the girl refuses you; don't you think so?"

"Perhaps so; still I think it is the right thing to do, and—yes—I will go now while I am in the humour. I will ask to see Mrs. Berrington, and put the whole matter to her plainly. I confess I have not much hope as to her consent."

"Nonsense, Charles, she will be only too delighted. Of course, you will let her know your position. Mrs. Berrington is not at all well off, and she will, I am sure, be charmed to see her daughter so comfortably settled. I think you are wrong, however. I should speak to Maud first; but you must do as you think best; and, Charles, I wish you every success. Come back as soon as your interview is over. I shall be on tenter hooks till I see you again."

And Mrs. Coleson rose and kissed her son, accom-

panying him to the door, and watching him until a bend in the road hid him from her sight.

As Coleson proceeded on his way to Woodville, pondering as to the phrases in which he should convey his interesting information to Mrs. Berrington, the impulse which had prompted the course he was taking lost its freshness, and he slackened his pace as he wondered whether his mother might not be right in her view of the matter after all. The more than comfortable income he already enjoyed would enable him to make a suitable settlement upon his wife, while the prospect of the future in-pouring of the golden Pactolus stream which had its fount and origin in that boon and a blessing to men, the Sympathetic Pill, afforded a vision of a really great fortune—a vision, too, which was quite certain to become a pleasing reality; for Mr. Frank Coleson, the proprietor of the wealth-producing article in question, had openly and constantly expressed his intention of making his only nephew, Charles, his sole heir. These facts, at present hid from Mrs. Berrington, might possibly afford sufficient gilding to make the Pill palatable. Of this, however, the Curate, knowing Mrs. Berrington's openly expressed distaste to anything savouring of trade, was by no means certain; while even if she were to allow the gold to outweigh the notoriety of the Pill, and were to give her consent to his suit, he was, again, uncertain in a large degree as to how that suit would be received by the honourable lady's daughter. The signs of interest in himself, which he had imagined he had perceived, might after all prove to have existed solely in his imagination; and it was at any rate possible, nay, the more he thought the matter over, probable, and even, so he thought at last, almost certain, that Maud would receive his advances with a prompt and an astonished rejection. Moved by these thoughts, and as he drew near to Woodville, he felt his courage oozing out at his finger-tips, and almost made up his mind to turn round, and ignominiously beat a retreat. On second thoughts, however, it seemed a pity to waste the amount of determination these musings left him, and with a sudden

effort, he turned the handle of the Woodville gate, rang the bell, and waited with some trepidation the answer to his question as to whether Mrs. Berrington were at home. Mrs. Berrington *was* at home, and, fortunately for Mr. Coleson's designs, was alone in the shady and cool drawing-room.

Alone she was, and depressed and dismal to boot, for there was, now, open war in the little family of two. Mrs. Berrington found it impossible to forgive her daughter the keen and bitter disappointment Maud's rejection of Lord Livermoor had caused her; the more she considered the matter the more desirable did the advantages of the lost chance appear, and the more desolate and deplorable did the normal aspect of affairs at Woodville seem. It was such a terrible fall, this descent from the heights of the Livermoor alliance to the depths of her home life, with its petty economies, its occasional wranglings with tradesmen, and its general and continued discomfort. Small wonder, then, that she could scarcely bring herself to speak even civilly to Maud, and that her daily querulous complainings and revilings were rapidly reducing that young lady to a condition in which even a life with the constant company of the rejected and distasteful Peer presented itself by comparison in almost a bearable light. Nor did there seem to be any prospect of an end to the intolerable persecution; several days had passed since Woodville saw the last of Lord Livermoor, and still the wailings of disappointed ambition were, hour after hour, outpoured; still the joyous pictures of the life of the wealthy and high-born were painted by the exasperated dame in the most glowing colours, with the sordid needs, and uncomfortable makeshifts of the Woodville life for a sombre and gloomy background. The only way in which Maud could gain even a modicum of peace was by frequent and prolonged absence from the maternal presence; a modicum only truly, for the hints, questions, and surmises of the girl's acquaintances, and their evident disbelief of her denials of the high fortune they designed for her, were almost as hard to bear as her mother's ever-flowing complaints.

The announcement, by the servant, of the Curate's name afforded Mrs. Berrington a prospect of relief for a short period, from the monotonous dwelling upon what she had come to regard as her wrongs ; and though she felt a sort of shrinking as she looked for the little red subscription book which she usually associated with clerical visits, she rose and received Mr. Coleson with an *empressement* he felt to be quite encouraging, ignorant of the fact that this *empressement* proceeded from nothing more favourable to his wishes than the relief his visit promised, and his hostess' respect for her visitor's cloth.

"So kind of you to call, Mr. Coleson, when your time must be so fully occupied," said Mrs. Berrington, as she sat down after shaking hands with the Curate ; and as she spoke she gave him an uneasy look, prompted by her fears of the little red book with which the Vicar, Mr. Argle, usually opened his interviews with his better-off parishioners.

No subscription list was, however, forthcoming, and the lady was beginning to take heart of grace, and to give herself up to a gossiping enjoyment of the St. Philip's news, when the Curate's opening salvo put all her pleasant anticipations to flight, and reduced her to a pitiable condition of mental confusion.

"I have not seen the Vicar, except in church, of course, for ages, and I *do* hear——," she was beginning, when an uneasiness which Mr. Coleson could not suppress caught her attention, and suddenly arrested the flow of her language. The truth is the Curate was afraid every minute that the fair figure of his beloved would appear in the doorway ; he was, moreover, full of the task before him, and his agitated feelings, which he vainly tried to control, betrayed themselves in a certain pallor, accompanied by nervous twitching, and a dryness in the mouth, signs of emotion he felt to be in the highest degree absurd, but which he was totally unable to conceal.

"Why, Mr. Coleson," exclaimed Mrs. Berrington, "what is the matter ? you—you are ill, do let me ring for some wine, or brandy, or something," and she started up to ring the bell.

"Not at all, I assure you—I am perfectly well—it is only—pray, pray be seated Mrs. Berrington," stammered the Curate, rising and placing a chair for the agitated lady.

"But what, then, *is* the——?"

"The truth is, Mrs. Berrington," said the Curate, making a desperate plunge into his subject, "I wish to speak to you upon a matter of—of some delicacy——"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the lady, aghast at his solemnity, and fearing she knew not what.

"I—I—it is well to speak plainly he went on, "I have a great affection for your daughter, and—and, in point of fact, I thought it the more honourable course to come to you first, and to ask your consent to my—my suit, in fact," he ended lamely.

"For my daughter! for Maud!" cried the young lady's mother in the tone of the most intense astonishment, "then *you* are the——Heavens! can it be possible that she—Mr. Coleson," she said, more collectedly, as she noted the eager attention he was giving to her broken sentences, and shuddered at the pitfall she had so nearly tumbled into, "Mr. Coleson, you astonish, you—you shock me. My daughter! and pray, Sir, may Maud Berrington's mother ask you, if you address me with her consent? This—this is a—a conspiracy, Sir, a conspiracy, to surprise me into a consent——"

"Nay, nay, Madam," interrupted the Curate, hastily, "you are quite, you are utterly mistaken. I assure you solemnly, that Miss Berrington has not the least idea or suspicion of—of this——"

"Do I rightly understand you," asked the widow, with some gleams of relief dawning upon her, "it is a fact that my daughter is unaware of your—your—I must say, misplaced attachment?"

"It is a positive fact that I have never addressed her upon the subject. I thought it more honourable——"

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Berrington, impatiently interrupting him, "I know, and it does you credit, Mr. Coleson, it is what I should expect from a clergyman. But, may I ask you further, have you any reason to expect

any—er—encouragement from Mau—from Miss Berrington?”

This was in the way of being a poser, and the young man's embarrassment increased as he replied.

“I—have—ventured to—sometimes I have thought I perceived—but, no, I cannot, I must not say——”

“In fact you have nothing but guesswork to go upon, Mr. Coleson,” said Maud's mother, with some severity. “Then I must say I think you are taking an unwarrantable liberty in coming to me in this way; it is not what I should have expected from a—a person of your sacred calling.”

“Mrs. Berrington, I assure you——” began the Curate deprecatingly, when the widow stopped him with a wave of her hand.

“For a person in your position, a curate, to allow yourself to think in such a way of my daughter, is—is almost irreligious——”

“Permit me to explain!” eagerly cried the tortured young man.

“There is no explanation required, or even possible. I wonder Mr. Argle allows such—why, Sir, Miss Berrington, I may tell you—for I care not who knows it—has just refused one of the most highly placed and wealthy Peers in England, and to come down to——” and the widow, with an execrable taste which can only be accounted for by her early training, smiled significantly enough, as her unfinished sentence pointed out to the clerical aspirant the bathos he presumed to offer to her daughter.

“To come down to a curate you were about to say,” he said, nothing abashed, but the rather stung into courage by her rudeness, “I must ask you kindly to listen to me, Mrs. Berrington, before you give me a final answer——”

“Final answer, indeed! the thing's absurd on the face of it,” she interrupted angrily.

“I must own myself to be ‘only a curate,’” continued Coleson, disregarding her interruption, “but, on the other hand, I am glad to say I am in a position which would allow me to make the most ample provision for—for my

wife, if this will weigh anything with you." Here the widow shook her head. "Moreover," he went on, "I am my uncle's heir, his only near relative, in fact, and shall, one day, I trust, be—well—extremely well off indeed."

"Your uncle! And pray, may I ask, who *is* your uncle?" asked the cruel woman, who was perfectly well aware who the uncle was, and of the source of his wealth.

"Mr. Frank Coleson," said the Curate, with a sinking heart, for he knew what was coming.

"The—er—the owner of the—er—Sympathetic Pill?" queried the merciless widow, with her eyes half shut, and enjoying the pain she was inflicting.

"Quite so," returned Coleson, "and a better man——"

"I do not doubt it, I do not doubt it, Mr. Coleson," she said, with a slight and acid accent on the "Coleson." "But, come now, Mr. Coleson"—again the accent—"you, even *you*, must see the total impossibility of the alliance you propose for my daughter. Surely, it is plainly absurd to suppose for one instant that the daughter of Lord Wrenford's brother can—can ally herself with—er—a—er—Sympathetic Pill. No, no, I must beg of you not to permit yourself such thoughts. So far as I am concerned, you have my assurance that I will not mention the—the subject to anyone; and I must earnestly ask you to use a like discretion. I have the greatest respect for your excellent mother, and I should be sorry to have to——"

"Enough! enough!" cried the Curate, exasperated beyond endurance at the patronising tone of the Honourable Mrs. Berrington, "it is unendurable the tone you take, Madam, I—I regret I intruded upon you, it is an unfortunate——" and without completing his sentence, the discomfited and ireful young man, with a cold bow, reached the door and made his escape.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A WARM RECEPTION.

THERE was joy in the Mess Room of the gallant King's Own Slashers when it became known that the popular Dolly was about to return to the scene of his duties ; many important events had been put off in view of that officer's return, for it was felt that, with Dolly's absence, the Regimental Races would lack their best and boldest rider, while the Annual Ball, which was to repay, in part, the hospitable debts the K.O.S. owed to the neighbourhood, would be wanting in the "go" and "finish" which Dolly's presence and superintendence assured. And so it came about that when Dolly appeared on the evening of his return, the ante-room resounded with vociferous cries of welcome, and Dolly's right arm was nearly wrung out of its socket by the hearty handshakes of his comrades-in-arms. The young man was, for the moment, carried out of his doleful musings by the heartiness of his reception, and the pleasure he felt in seeing once more the well-known faces, hearing the familiar voices, and listening to the outpouring of the budget of regimental news ; but, as the evening wore on, and the interest of the various stories evaporated in their repeated relation, all the old worries came back to him with renewed vigour, and, having no fund of animated spirits to draw upon, Dolly became listless in his interest, and vague in his replies,

"Why, what is the matter with you, Dolly, old man?" anxiously asked a brother officer, who had been descanting at length on the various excellences of a horse Dolly had promised to ride for him in the all-important races. "You're not seedy, are you?"

"Seedy? eh? I beg your pardon, did you say you were——?" asked Dolly, who, in truth, had not given his friend's discourse the attention its importance deserved.

"Not I," laughed his brother officer, "*you*, old man; are *you* seedy? I've been telling you about Quickset for the last ten minutes, and, upon my word, I don't believe you've heard a word I have said. You *must* be ill, Dolly. It's a poor look out for me if you are, for I've backed you and Quickset for a pot of money."

"Oh! you needn't worry, old man, I'm as fit as a fiddle," said Dolly, rousing himself. "Rather fagged out, that's all; horrid bore travelling, beastly hot in the train, don't you know, I think I'll turn in," and nodding to the company, and in spite of their almost indignant remonstrances, Dolly made his escape and retired to his quarters.

Now this was a most unprecedented proceeding on Dolly's part, for he was usually the last to think of turning in, and his departure was the signal for many lugubrious head-shakings and surmisings.

"By George! I do believe Dolly's going to be ill! never knew him to do such a thing before!" exclaimed the horsey individual he had been talking with. "It's a pretty caper for me if he is," he added, and the bare thought plunged him into the dolefullest of dumps.

"Oh, nonsense!" said another of the company, who knew something of Dolly's private affairs, "he has had a rumpus with Lamley *père*, been outrunning the constable, I expect; it will all blow over soon, sort of thing that always does blow over—governor forks out, another clean slate, and there you are again, as right as a trivet, don't you know."

"I believe there's a woman in it," said the youngest sub. with a knowing air, and caressing his nascent moustache, "always *is* a woman in it, you know. I remember a story, something about a Cadi, sort of Eastern Judge, don't you know, 'where's the woman?' says he, when——"

"For Heaven's sake spare us the rest!" exclaimed a *confrère*, "you know you never can get to the point, and when you do, you forget it. Dolly has been through the mill a little too often for that to trouble him. Never did worry himself for long about that sort of thing. 'How

happy could I be with either, were t'other dear charmer away,' that is master Dolly all over." And here the conversation changed, and veered around again to the approaching races and the ball.

However, the next day put a feather in the cap of the juvenile officer, for Dolly's particular chum came into the ante-room with a solemn and portentous look in his countenance. "I say, you fellows," he exclaimed, "the young 'un was right after all; no mistake about it this time, Dolly is hard hit; never saw a fellow so gone in my life."

"Gone eh! where's he gone?" said the stupid member, and the butt of the Mess.

"That man will kill me some day," said Dolly's friend, "*gone*; don't you know what I mean? a clean case, blighted hopes, revolver, five chambers loaded, one empty, hole in his forehead, letter clasped to his left breast, 'Dearest Araminta, couldn't exist without you, life one long blank,' temporary insanity, 'Dead March' in *Saul*, and there you are, don't you know?"

"Bless my soul! you don't mean to say so! And I must say I can't see anything to snigger at in such an awful——" Thus the stupid one until his voice was drowned in peals of laughter.

"Seriously though," resumed Dolly's friend as the laughter was subsiding, "I am afraid poor old Dolly is in a bad way; I ran in just now and caught him gazing fondly at a photograph; he didn't hear me come in, and before I could delicately hint at my presence, I'll be hanged if he didn't kiss it; regular smack, don't you know, as if he meant it. I didn't wait, you may well believe, but departed gingerly and with much caution."

Poor Dolly! It was most unfortunate that he should have chosen that particular moment to solace himself with a prolonged gaze at the pictured features of his darling Mary, and it was still more unfortunate that his feelings should have prompted him to mumble the lovely presentment; it was much too good a joke to be lightly treated, and his life was made a burden to him by the quips and gibes—not always in the best of taste—of his comrades;

even his good temper gave way at last under the strain, and it was not until he administered a remarkably sharp, and certainly well-deserved rebuke to the "young 'un," for one of his feeble and musty jokes, that his brother officers recognised the fact that the volatile Dolly was caught at last, and was, moreover, very much in earnest indeed.

Mary's photograph, and an occasional letter concerning its fair original, were the only solaces to the grief he felt at being separated from his beloved, and at having to leave matters in such an unsettled and unsatisfactory state. "No letters, mind you!" had been the stern dictum of the worthy Mayor of St. Philip's, and the youthful pair were obliged to abide by this hard saying of his; and though Dolly yearned to pour out his soul's devotion on paper, and longed for an envelope containing the like outpourings from the other side, these longings were in vain, and he had to content himself with such bald items as Mrs. Laver chose to impart in the four pages of St. Philip's gossip she took this opportunity to inflict upon Mr. Lamley's son. The sum of these items amounted simply to naught; for, save the fact of Mary's constancy, of which he was assured before, the letters contained no news, and everything seemed to be at a painfully dull and monotonous standstill. Mr. Lamley had not again mentioned his son's name to his friend and Dolly's correspondent, and the Mayor on his part seemed to deem it expedient to preserve a like judicious silence; in fact, it appeared to Dolly as if all parties—save the lovely Mary herself—were taking the opportunity of his absence to let his love-affair die a natural death; and poor Dolly cursed his fate in his impatience, and spent many hours in inventing the wildest and maddest plans, which had for their end and object the final bliss of Mary Waddell and Adolphus Lamley.

Dolly was mistaken in one particular, however; something *was* being done, though, when he heard of it, he would have given anything he possessed to have made that something undone.

Mr. Wellings was no lukewarm ally; his wealth,

together with his somewhat hasty enthusiasm in any scheme he took up had given him an influence in the Baptist Connexion which the much harassed ministers who officiated from time to time in St. Philip's found it impossible to contend against ; " our venerable brother," backed up by his purse and his following, was one too many for them, and invariably they found themselves on the horns of a dilemma—they must either go or give in ; and, as a rule, they swallowed their pride and their prejudices and gave in ; until the venerable one's galling yoke, and unpleasant interference, added to the free and impartial comments he bestowed upon their pulpit eloquence, proved stronger than the fine flavour of the fleshpots of St. Philip's, and forced them to the other alternative, viz., an unwilling resignation. An important individual in the august bodies which governed the town was Mr. Wellings also, as his son-in-law, the Mayor, knew to his cost ; indeed, Mr. Waddell found it expedient to consult Mr. Wellings on any scheme about the town before the meetings, and generally gave in, too, to the arbitrary old man's opinion, for Mr. Wellings nearly always carried the day. Mary's grandfather, then, was accustomed to have his own way in everything, and he found it difficult to support the uncertainty in which the girl's love affair seemed involved ; moreover, he loved his pretty grand-daughter more than anyone else in the world, and he longed to bring this matter, in which he took such a keen interest, to a successful issue. The thought that the young man was of a somewhat superior social position to Mary's was not without its charms for old Mr. Wellings, who, in spite of his sneers at what he called " the nobs," had a sneaking desire to see his daughter's children climbing up the social ladder. These various considerations prompted much thought on the subject of Mary's settlement in life ; and after careful pondering, he came to the conclusion that he would take the bull by the horns, or, to put it plainly, would seek an interview with the obstructive Lamley, and in that interview use such persuasions, chiefly in the form of coin of the realm, as should induce Dolly's father to cease his

obstruction, and take the charming Mary to his arms as the bride of his son and heir. When once he had got this idea into his head, it seemed so feasible a plan and he felt so clearly the force of the arguments he intended to use, that he determined not to delay in the matter, but to strike at once while the iron of his resolution was hot. To no soul did he breathe a word of his determination, though he indulged himself in such hints to Mary as to a speedy dissolution of all difficulties as raised the girl's expectations to fever heat.

Hence it came about that, shortly after Dolly's return to the *dépôt* of the K.O.S., Dolly's father was interrupted one morning in the perusal of his daily paper by the announcement that "a person of the name of Wellings" wished to see him.

Mr. Jarvis, the butler, had had a large experience of the marks and signs of the gentleman in the course of many years of "genteel" service, and he was not to be deceived by the black frock coat and white tie which Mr. Wellings had deemed the importance of the occasion to demand. These adornments of his outer man, which, together with a shiny black waistcoat and continuations, formed the Sabbatical costume of the worthy deacon, gave him the appearance of a respectable undertaker—a branch of his business in which he was justly pre-eminent in the town—though his rubicund and shining visage, with its setting of white hair and whiskers, had nothing—on this occasion, at least—of the doleful solemnity he imported into his appearance when calling to receive his melancholy orders anent the plumes, scarves, gloves, and the other absurd trappings of woe.

No ; a more festive business was toward, so he hoped, a wedding, to wit; and in spite of a certain nervousness which he could not quite control, or, perhaps, on account of that nervousness, his demeanour displayed a savour of chastened joviality which sat somewhat ill upon him, and puzzled Jarvis extremely.

"Wellings?" said Jarvis's master ; "Wellings? Who the deuce is Wellings? What does he want, Jarvis? Stay! I seem to know the name somehow. Show him in!"

And as Mr. Wellings was crossing the hall, Mr. Lamley remembered he had seen the name over the large upholsterer's shop in the market place, and he wondered what on earth the man wanted with *him*, for he was quite unaware of the upholsterer's relationship to the object of his son's last absurd infatuation.

"Eh? Eh? Mr. Wellings?" said he, as the worthy deacon entered, in all the shining glory of his Sunday clothes.

"Mr. Wellings, the upholsterer, eh? Well Sir, if it's my custom you want, I don't require anything; and I must say it is an extraordinary thing to call for orders in this way."

This unexpected reception took the old gentleman rather aback, but he was too full of his subject, and too eager to open out about it, to be abashed for long.

"No, Sir, I have *not* called for orders, nor is it my 'abit so to do, for the nobility and gentry receive my circulars annually, in which they are thanked for past favours, and solicited for further orders, while at the same time they are assured—ahem!——"

And here Mr. Wellings pulled himself up short, for he found he was drifting into a recitation of his annual circular—a composition he took much pains about, and of which he was truly proud.

"Quite a different matter has procured me the honour of paying you a visit; and as it is not a subject which can be got over in five minutes, with your kind permission I will take a chair."

And suiting the action to the words he drew forward a chair, placed his gloves, and a large yellow bandana handkerchief in his tall shiny hat, and, depositing the hat and its overflowing contents under the chair, he regarded the astounded Mr. Lamley with a beaming smile.

"Great Heavens! the man's mad!" said Mr. Lamley, *sotto voce*. "What in the world, Sir, do you mean by intruding upon me in this unwarrantable manner?" he exclaimed aloud, as he reached forward to ring the bell for Jarvis to show the unwelcome visitor out.

"Stop a minute! Stop a minute till I explain myself!"

cried Mr. Wellings in some anxiety, "I've took the liberty of calling because I am Mary's grandfather——"

"And who the devil is Mary?" exclaimed Mr. Lamley.

"Devil! my *dear* Sir! Devil!" cried the deacon, greatly shocked, "but that's neither here nor there," he went on, soothingly, as Mr. Lamley rose indignantly from his chair, "pray, pray be seated; Mary is the young woman as your son is engaged to, leastways——"

"You impertinent—insolent—you, you—how *dare* you, Sir!" cried Mr. Lamley in a tearing rage.

"Now, now, now!" said Mr. Wellings in a soothing tone, "I ain't meaning no offence, I assure you, quite the contrary, in fact, and if they ain't azactly engaged *now*——"

"Now, look here, Sir," said Mr. Lamley in a dangerously quiet voice, "I have had enough of this—this folly; my son is a young fool, and if you don't know how to take care of your daughter or whatever she is, that is not my fault; I refuse to listen to another word upon the subject; let me pass, Sir," for Mr. Wellings had got between him and the bell, "and let us have no more of this nonsense." But Mr. Wellings' obstinacy was roused, and he was determined to have his say.

"Look 'ere," he said, still keeping his position, "I don't know what you mean about taking care of Mary, there ain't a better girl in St. Philip's for that matter; and what's the use of making all this rumpus? Why shouldn't the young folks be made 'appy? There ain't nothing in the way but you; Waddell's a man well-to-do, and I've a-saved a pretty penny, though I say it as shouldn't, and we're both of us ready to come down 'andsome to 'elp 'em to set up comfortable like."

By this time Mr. Lamley, who was absolutely speechless with rage, had got to the bell, and rung it violently, and Mr. Wellings, without knowing how it came about, in a very short time found himself at the open front-door of The Towers, with Jarvis behind him holding out the Deacon's Sunday hat, with its contents.

"Well! of all the——" exclaimed he as he mechanically

took hold of his hat, and rubbed his hot face with the yellow bandana, previously to wending his way with uncertain steps down the drive, "of all the tigers as ever I——; why, the man's worse nor a Turk! To think that that nice young man with the curly hair, as mild as mild, should have such a *horful* parient! Never again! not if I know it! No respect for grey 'airs, though his own is grey enough, nor nothink! But if he thinks I'm agoin' to be putt down with bluster and blarney he's very much mistook, and Mary shall marry that young man nollings-wollings, or I'll know the reason why." And thus muttering to himself, the old man made his way home in a state of confusion almost pitiable.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A HOPELESS AFFAIR.

THE uncertainty which surrounded her love-affair was causing Mary Waddell a great deal of anxiety, nor was this anxiety allayed by the view her father took of the matter. Mr. Waddell did not deem it expedient to discuss the subject with his daughter; he was vexed with himself for having given way before the impetuous urgings of the youthful Dolly and his aged ally Mr. Wellings; the whole affair was annoying to him, and he hoped it would die a natural death, through the absence of the sustenance—the meetings, the preconubial interchange of affection, the long and impassioned letters which love feeds upon. But he did not take into consideration the fact, that though he was content to preserve a judicious silence upon the distasteful subject, there were others to whom the said subject was by no means distasteful; so much the contrary in fact, that it formed the staple of their conversation; for whatever matter was under discussion with his wife and his daughter the talk was sure, sooner or later, to veer round to the one absorbing topic, namely, the excellences bodily and mental of Adolphus

Lamley, the chances of his father giving way, and the general blissfulness of affairs, that giving way would bring in its train.

Mr. Waddell was not, however, averse to enlarging upon the matter to the wife of his bosom, and the tone he took provoked indignant rejoinders from the somewhat romantic matron; to his "out of sight, out of mind," she replied with another example of proverbial philosophy to the effect that "absence makes the heart grow fonder," while she treated his constantly repeated disbelief in the fidelity of the absent Dolly with a contempt engendered by her maternal partiality, and the keen insight this partiality gave her into the many charms, and the various good qualities of pretty Mary Waddell. In this she was aided and abetted by her father, who frequently took occasion to step round and have a talk with his daughter and grand-daughter.

Mr. Lamley's exceedingly rude reception of his, Mr. Wellings', overtures, affected the old man deeply; the more he thought over the interview, and its unpleasant incidents, the less he liked it. Why, he, the richest man in St. Philip's-on-Sea, the most respected fellow-townsmen, a guardian of the poor, an important vestryman, the Deacon *par excellence* of the Baptist Chapel, had been something very like turned out of the house by a fellow he could buy up twice over. It was monstrous! it was almost sacrilegious! and all because he was ready to pay over a large sum of money in order to make the man's son happy!

At first a certain sentiment of shame at the ridiculous figure he had cut prompted him to hold his tongue about this most unpleasant interview, but when the afternoon came round, and he found himself seated in his daughter's comfortable parlour, with Mary beside him and Mrs. Waddell opposite him, and all three engaged upon the congenial subject of Dolly, he found it impossible for him to keep such an important item of intelligence to himself.

"Reginald says he's sure Mr. Lamley won't give way; how he does keep on about it to be sure," said Mrs.

Waddell with a sigh, "I do declare he almost brings me over to his mind. He says it is a most humiliating position for him to be placed in, and if Mary wasn't so sure of herself I should almost be inclined to give it up."

"I don't see that father need trouble about that, it is not as if everybody was talking about it; I don't think I could bear it then," said Mary.

"Upon my word, Louisa and Mary," said Mr. Wellings, with a doleful shake of his head, "I begin to agree with Waddell."

"Oh, grandfather!" cried Mary, "why you have all along said it was only a matter of time."

"Well, so I have, my dear, so I have for certain, but circumstances alter cases, as the sayin' is," and he nodded in a significant manner, and pursed up his lips as if to keep in the news he was longing to disclose, for his soul yearned for some healing balms for the wounds his pride and consequence had received.

"Why, whatever do you mean, father?" asked Mrs. Waddell, staring intently at him.

"Well, my dear, I didn't mean to tell you, and that's the truth," said he. "I done it all for the best, but if I'd a-known——. I never was so insulted in my life——"

"Insulted!" cried Mary, "why what——"

"Yes, my dear, insulted by your pa-in-law as was to have been, and a more owdacious, rampagious, old heathen I never wish to see. Thinks I, my little maid's a-grieving after her young man, and her old grandfather 'll just go and see what he can do with him as stands in the way—meaning the young man's father, my dear; and I went, my dear, I went; and I told him as money wasn't no object; but, bless you, I might so well have spoke to a brick wall, for never a word would he listen to, but took to cursing and swearing enough to make your flesh creep; and before I knew where I was, there was I outside the front door, if you'll believe me, with the servant man a-holding out my 'at to me. I'd better a-let it alone, better a-let it alone, for I didn't think to be turned out of a man's house at my age; no, I never thought to come to that."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Waddell in a high state of indignation. "Of all the—why it passes everything! to think of *you*, father—turned out! Well, Mary, my dear, you may well kiss your grandfather! to be treated like that, and all because he was wanting to make things comfortable! After *that*!"

"Yes, as you say, Louisa," said the old man, fondling Mary's brown hair as she knelt at his knee, "after that I am afraid, I am very much afraid, Mary, my dear little maid, that there is not much chance of things goin' as you and me and your mother wish, to say nothink of the young man himself. You wouldn't go for to marry a man whose father wouldn't have nothing to say to you, eh, my dear? let alone bein' the most horful-tempered hold tiger as ever I set eyes on!"

"It is very hard on you, Mary, I know," chimed in Mrs. Waddell, "for a nicer, pleasanter-spoken young man—well, it's no use speaking of that now; and whatever you do, father, don't tell Reginald, for it would just drive him mad, and he would go and do something dreadful—I know he would."

"It ain't likely as I should tell him, for it ain't anything as I am proud of," said Mr. Wellings; "the best thing as can be done is for you or Mary to take and write a line to the young man, and say as it's all over between him an' Mary, for if that old Turk is proud, we have our proper pride too, and there is some things as *can't* be putt up with. I did think as the young man should marry her out of hand, and me and Waddell should set 'em up, and snap our fingers at 'im; but second thoughts is best, and there ain't no happiness to be found in doing what's wrong, even if Waddell would agree to it, which he wouldn't."

All this time Mary had said nothing; she had hidden her face in her hands, which were clasped round the old man's knees, for she saw only too plainly how her grandfather's hasty action, and its unhappy consequences, left her with but little hope as regarded Dolly. As her mother said, it was hard, very hard, to have to give up all the bright promise Dolly's love had brought her; but

her grandfather and her mother were right; if Mr. Lamley were proud, she, Mary, was proud too; and though she felt she never could be happy again, she felt, at the same time, the hopelessness of it all; her father had said she should not go where she was not welcome, and even if he were to give way—a most remote contingency—she could never bear, even for Dolly, to force herself upon the Lamleys, to endure their neglect, or perhaps their insults; for Mr. Lamley did not appear to restrain himself when things were not to his taste.

"I—I—am sorry, dreadfully sorry for you," she said at last, looking up into the old man's face with tear-stained cheeks; "how *could* he? I am sure Dolly would be—but, indeed, you are right; I see there is no hope—it is all so sudden, so—I——" and here the poor girl quite broke down, and turned to her mother, who took her to her kind and capacious bosom, and soon led her away with soothing and comforting words.

There are some troubles which are best borne in solitude, and so Mary felt; for her mother's condolences, kind and loving as they were, jarred upon her, and she longed to think over this new and disastrous turn in her affairs alone. When, then, Mrs. Waddell had exhausted her vocabulary of soothing words, and seeing Mary more composed, had begun to dilate upon the dreadful way in which Mr. Lamley had behaved, Mary found it difficult to return coherent answers to the many "Isn't it now, my dears?" which her mother poured out upon her, and at length she begged to be left alone for awhile, a request Mrs. Waddell agreed to, though she was a little hurt at it.

"Perhaps it *is* better as you should think it all out by yourself, Mary, for the sooner it is all over the better, and I suppose you will have to write to young Mr. Lamley, poor fellow; though your own mother would do anything she could to help you, my dear."

And with this she kissed Mary, and softly closed the door of the girl's chamber, to which she had led her when her grief and disappointment overcame her.

Thus left to herself, Mary resolutely set herself to face her position, in the vague hope that some small gleams

of comfort might lighten the general gloom ; she sought in vain, however, for the longer she looked, and the deeper she pondered, the blacker and darker did the prospect appear, and she was at last forced to own to herself that there was, indeed, nothing left her but the miserable duty her mother and grandfather had hinted at. Dolly had not been able to keep from her some relation of his father's attitude on hearing of his son's engagement, and though he had, naturally, glosed the matter over, and smoothed it out as well as he could, enough had been said to let Mary know the extreme distaste Mr. Lamley felt at the whole affair ; nor had Dolly been able to assure her of his sister's support and sympathy ; while Mr. Waddell's strongly-expressed regret at having, in a manner, allowed the half-engagement to go on, and his sense of humiliation at the position his daughter was placed in were sufficiently evident. These things had come to Mary's ears through her mother, and had, in some degree, prepared her for the *fiasco* her grandfather's ill-judged zeal had brought about. No, there was no chance ; it was all utterly hopeless. Mr. Lamley had only too plainly shown that he would not give way, and without his consent poor Mary's house of cards must fall to the ground. How much it all meant for her, how deeply the gay and gallant Dolly had fixed his image in her heart, she only realised now, in the anguish she endured at the thought of losing him—in the miserable blankness of a future without Dolly in the foreground. All those bright and happy pictures the two lovers had so fondly painted must now dissolve into thin air.

And Dolly, how would Dolly take it all ? Of his firm and true affection Mary did not doubt for one instant ; she *knew* he loved her, and some of her keenest pangs came to her in this hour of her wretchedness from the knowledge of what his grief would be. The absolute helplessness of it all she must place before him in all its naked plainness, for Mary felt she could not bear to read of his wild disappointment, much less to see him, and to hear the appeals to her love she feared he would make ;

no, she would beg him, of his love for her, to spare her such misery. It was no easy task, then, this that she had before her, and sheet after sheet was covered with writing, and torn up as soon as read before she finished the sad, tear-blotted letter which told her lover in very simple language that all must indeed be over between them. She did not disguise from Dolly the fact that she still loved him, nor did she hide from him her bitter grief and sorrow at the step she was thus forced to take, but she showed him plainly how rootedly his father was against them, she reminded him of Mr. Lamley's opposition at the very outset, and set before him the rough and rude reception her grandfather's overtures had met with ; in the face of this, and in duty to her self-respect, and to her parent's self-respect she must sacrifice her love, nor did she dare to hope that the future held out any promise of better things. Dolly must be kind, he must consider her and spare her any letters or interviews, for indeed, indeed, it was all utterly hopeless, and nothing that he could do or say could alter her fixed and firm determination.

As Mary read over this her first and last letter to her lover, the pitifulness of it all overcame her, and for a long time she gave herself up to the thought of the happy past, and the tears welled up in the pretty eyes, and slowly coursed down her cheeks as she mused over what might have been with the fatal letter in her lap. At last with a strong effort she roused herself, and removing as far as she could the traces of the last hours of sorrowful misery, she prepared to post the letter with her own hands, for she did not wish the servants to speculate upon what Miss Mary had to say to A. Lamley, Esq., Porton Barracks, Lanton.

Mrs. Waddell was astonished at her daughter's calmness when Mary came into the parlour, where she was sitting in no very happy frame of mind herself, and told her mother that the letter was written, and that she should go out and post it herself. Mary kept her hand on the door as she spoke, for, for all her calm looks and way of speaking, she knew it only wanted some word of sympathy

from her mother to again open the flood-gates of her sorrow ; so she just said her say, and before Mrs. Waddell could reply, her daughter was gone. The letter posted, Mary suddenly remembered that Mrs. Laver was as yet ignorant of the step she had taken, and she quickly walked towards St. Philip's Park, for Mrs. Laver's kindness, and the great interest she had taken in the pair of lovers, gave her a sort of right to know this sad end of it all.

Mrs. Laver was in, and fortunately for Mary's purpose, alone. At first she rallied her *protégée* for cowardliness, and put before her the absurdity of giving in thus at the very outset, pleading, too, for Dolly, and painting his grief in such dark colours as almost to reduce Mary to tears again ; but when she had listened to all Mary had had to say, and had heard the story of Mr. Wellings' reception, and when Mary had appealed to her as to whether *she* would go on in an affair which was detestable to the one side, and now distasteful to the other, when she saw how the pride of the girl's people, and the girl's own pride was now up in arms, she agreed with Mary that it was, indeed, hopeless, and that Mary had done what was right, and what she herself would have done in the like unhappy circumstances.

"Poor Dolly !" she said, "it is as hard for him as it is for you, Mary ; I can't think how he will take it. It does not matter what you said to him, I am sure he will not give you up without a struggle ; I expect your letter will bring him post haste to St. Philip's.

"Oh ! I hope not, I hope not," exclaimed Mary, "I could not bear to see him."

"It is too absurd of Mr. Lamley, and I shall tell him what I think of him ; but I am afraid I can do no good, for he is very determined. I have said what I could for you both, my dear, and I might have spared myself the trouble, for he would not listen to me, and was, indeed, quite angry with me for speaking. By the way, you have company in your misfortunes, or I am very much mistaken. My other pair of lovers are not in the happiest frame of mind ; I have been to call on Mrs. Berrington

this afternoon, and I am sure she is bullying Maud ; she looks, poor girl, quite thin and worn ; while his Reverence, our deputy pastor, has quite lost his *debonnaire* look. Well, good-bye, my dear, you must not be too downcast. I hardly know how to comfort you, Mary ; but come and see me again soon, it will do you good to talk it over." And the widow exhibited another example of the cynic's axiom, for, in spite of her sympathy with her *protégée's* grief, she certainly extracted no small amount of satisfaction from the contemplation of the story in action which was being told before her.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TWO FAIR DAMSELS.

THERE yet remained some hour and a-half to Mary, as she left Rozel before the time of the evening meal at her home. The air was soft and mild, and as, in her present frame of mind, she shrank from the well-intentioned efforts at consolation her mother would be sure to make, Mary determined to stay out until it should be necessary for her to return homewards. There was a belt of trees at the end of the far-famed St. Philip's Parade, which the public-spirited Town Council had made comfortable with seats, and beautiful with flower-beds ; given up in the daytime to the infant population of St. Philip's and their attendant nursemaids, at this period of the day the Grove, as it was called, would be sure to be almost deserted, and a fit place for the indulgence of melancholy musings ; hither then did Mary convey herself and her troubles. She was right in her surmise, for as she came to the end of the Parade, and neared the Grove, it was, indeed, deserted, there being but one solitary occupant, a feminine figure, seated on one of the further benches. As Mary drew near, something in the despondent attitude of the figure before her roused her curiosity and her sympathy, and she determined to walk past the bench, glance at the

person as she passed, and return to the other end of the Grove, where she could seat herself in dismal solitude. The girl she was nearing was so engrossed in her thoughts that Mary's footsteps did not rouse her until she approached closely enough for face and figure to be plain.

"Why," cried Mary, as the girl turned round and looked at her, "it is Miss Berrington!"

And Miss Berrington, indeed, it was, for she also was driven to seek a refuge; not from her mother's kindly sympathy, as in Mary's case, but from her querulous complainings.

"Oh! I often come here in the evenings, it is quiet and pleasant, and there is seldom anyone to disturb one," said Maud, moving so as to allow Mary to seat herself by her side.

The daily worrying Maud received from her mother, and the trouble Charles Coleson's avoidance and cold greetings caused her, had left marks in her face which Mary was not slow to perceive. Her own bitter disappointment made her heart yearn with sympathy, and she longed to ask Maud what it was that was making her so evidently unhappy. Dolly had imparted to her at Mrs. Laver's the attitude of Coleson's mind towards the despondent-looking girl beside her, but Mary did not know in what light her friend would regard the Curate's devotion, nor had she any reason to connect Maud's evident wretchedness with Charles Coleson; she longed to say something to comfort her friend, but she did not know how to begin upon so delicate a subject. The traces of the afternoon's struggle had not, on *her* side, disappeared from Mary's face, and a question from Maud determined Mary to make a confidante of her friend, and to, by this means, give her an opportunity for confidences on her part.

"Why, Mary!" exclaimed Maud, looking closely into the girl's face, "you look quite worn and ill, and you have been crying, dear. You are not in trouble?"

"Indeed I am, in the very greatest trouble; I could not bear to go home yet, and that is why I came here."

"I wish I could help you, or comfort you, Mary," said Maud, taking her hand, "I know what trouble is myself."

"I hope, dear Miss Berrington, you will never have to go through the struggle I have gone through this afternoon."

And then with many a pause, and, often in broken tones, Mary poured out the history of her woes, without, however, telling Maud the name of her lost lover.

Maud sat still, holding Mary's hand, and saying nothing for some moments after Mary had finished speaking.

"I do not think it is so hopeless as you imagine, Mary," she said at last, "you know he loves you, and *he* knows of your affection, and if he is worthy of the name of a man he will break through all these silly spider-webs of pride and prejudice, and carry you off in spite of all and everything; if you are sure of his love, if he is true and constant——"

"Sure of Dolly!" cried Mary in some heat, "I am as sure——" and she stopped in much confusion, for she saw the slip of the tongue she had made.

"It is Mr. Lamley, then," said Maud with a sad little smile, "I might have known, for I remember seeing you together, once or twice, and then there was the Concert, and——"

"Oh! I hope, I *do* hope no one else has noticed anything, it would be terrible to be talked about," interrupted Mary.

"It is an infliction *I* have had to endure, then," said Maud bitterly.

"It is not that, surely, that makes you look so unhappy?" asked Mary, almost before she thought of what she was saying.

"Do I then look so woe-begone?" said Maud. "Ah, well, Mary dear, you are not the only miserable woman in the world, if that is any satisfaction to you; and you are happy, yes, happy in one thing, for you are certain of Mr. Lamley's constancy; and if he is true, all *must* be well in the end—while I——"

"No one could help loving and admiring *you*," cried her enthusiastic friend, "why, Dolly told me that Mr. Coleson——" and here she paused for she felt she was treading on delicate ground, and she did not know how Maud would take the information she had to impart.

But it was too late for her to draw back; Maud had heard her, and her listless, melancholy share in the conversation was suddenly turned to eager expectancy. "Yes! Mr. Coleson said——?" she cried breathlessly.

"I don't know if I ought to tell you, it was told Dolly in confidence, and, of course, he used to tell me everything," she said with a sigh.

Now was Maud in a somewhat difficult position; she was of a different mould from Maud, and was not disposed to make her love affairs a matter of discussion; besides nothing had been said to her by Charles Coleson, and her mother had carefully concealed from her daughter the advances the Curate had made in his interview of a day or two ago. On the other hand Maud was longing to know what had passed; from Mary's manner she judged it was something she would give worlds to hear; and at the thought of what it might be, love gained the day, and pride flew away discomfited.

"Mary, I beg you to tell me, I beseech you to keep nothing from me," she cried, at last in great agitation, and she seized Mary's hand again.

"Then it is this that makes you ill, and miserable?" cried Mary catching her friend's agitation, "you love him, and——"

"Tell me! tell me!" cried Maud impatiently, pressing Mary's hand.

"Why, he loves you and admires you more than anything in the world; he is wretched because he thinks you are going to marry Lord Livermoor. Oh! how *glad* I am that I came here to-night! how glad I am to be able to tell you the real truth. Now you will be happy, and it will be I who——"

"How good and kind you are, dear little Mary!" interrupted Maud, "you have forgotten all your own troubles, you dear unselfish girl. But, indeed, I cannot

tell you what this that you have told me means to me, you do not know what I have suffered. The persecution, the shame of it! my poor mother, Lord Livermoor's rank and wealth has dazzled her, she must have led him to believe—she is bitterly disappointed because I refused him, how *could* I accept a man I detest, and all the time Charles was——what he must have thought of me!”

“You refused Lord Livermoor!” exclaimed Mary, with some awe in her tone, for she had the middle-class intense respect for the Peerage.

“Ah! I forgot—I did not think what I was saying. You must not say a word of this to anyone, Mary. He was kind, wonderfully kind; and now that it is all over I am sorry for the hard thoughts I had of him. But how late it is, Mary!” she exclaimed, looking at her watch; and, hastily rising, the two friends hurried off homewards, for, engrossed in their mutual confidences, they had not seen how the shadows were lengthening, as the evening drew on apace.

The unexpected piece of news which Mary Waddell had conveyed to her gave Maud plenty of food for pleasant and exciting meditation, and enabled her to bear her mother's monotonous plaint with unaccustomed equanimity. The only thing that now stood between the Curate and the fair object of his adoration was the persistent rumour of the brilliant future in store for Maud as the *fiancée* of Lord Livermoor; for, in spite of her constant denials of the honours proposed for her, the St. Philip's gossips were unwilling to give up an idea which Mrs. Berrington's hints and half-confidences had converted into a certainty no words of Maud's could shake. Some opposition from her mother Maud knew she must expect, but when once Charles Coleson should be convinced that there was indeed nothing in the Livermoor imbroglio, and should have summoned up courage to declare himself, Maud was quite determined enough to over-ride any objections of her mother's; and, in an affair in which her life's happiness was so intimately concerned, she meant to insist upon her right to choose for herself. The thought that there would soon be an end to the miserable

life she was enduring, and that all these repinings and complainings of her mother's would cease, was almost intoxicating; and Mrs. Berrington resented her daughter's evident and mysterious cheerfulness by lapsing into a sullen silence which was only broken by the usual good-night greetings.

Mrs. Berrington's sullen humour was not dispelled by the night's rest, and on Maud's appearing in the morning with her mother's tray, and the budget the post had brought, she scarcely vouchsafed her daughter a word. One of the letters, however, excited her curiosity, and caused her to break through her silent attitude towards her daughter.

"A letter from your uncle!" she exclaimed. "From Lord Wrenford. What *can* he have to write about?" for, as has been remarked before, the communications between the relatives were conducted through the medium of Lord Wrenford's lawyers.

"Good heavens!" she gasped out, as she read the short note. "We are ruined, Maud! Oh! what will become of us? What will become of us?" And she handed the letter to Maud, her fingers trembling, and scarcely able to grasp the paper. "My poor girl! My poor girl! Oh! what are we to do? what are we to do?" she moaned, as she leant back on her pillows, with a shocked and terrified gaze at her daughter.

And truly there was ample excuse for her agitation. An event which had for some time been expected in the circle in which the Wrenfords moved had at length taken place; the only marvel was that it had been delayed so long. Lord Wrenford's relations were tired of bolstering him up; the ruin his senseless extravagance had for years threatened had at last come upon him. His creditors could be appeased no longer, the crash could not be staved off, and another disgraceful bankruptcy in high life was impending. Lord Wrenford's note, in curt though kind enough terms, informed his brother's widow that the state of his affairs no longer permitted him to continue the allowance he had made her, nor was there any hope that he would *ever* be able to assist her, for, so

he said, after his affairs were wound up, there would remain to him only a miserable pittance on which he must perforce eke out existence with his wife in some cheap watering-place abroad. This "miserable pittance" was a polite fiction on his lordship's part, by the way, for his assets were infinitely below his debts, and many a London tradesman had to bemoan his misplaced confidence in the easy-going, and, if the truth must be told, somewhat loose-living Peer: it was, in fact, to the bounty of his relative, Lord Livermoor, who had, indeed, so often helped him before, that he was indebted for the annual sum which permitted him to reign, by virtue of his title, and a good fellowship entirely devoid of pride, as lord paramount in a straightened settlement of the British shabby-genteel on the Brittany coast. The cheap cigars, cognac, and wines of his new abode were not without their charms for Lord Wrenford, while the deference of the out-at-elbows community was also pleasing to him. It was, as too often happens, upon his unfortunate wife that the blow fell most severely, and her grief and shame at her position, together with an extreme distaste for the loud and vulgar society which was all that the place afforded, prompted a retirement which procured for her the dislike of her husband's *confrères* and their feminine belongings, and rendered her extremely unpopular.

All that this miserable letter meant was very plainly revealed to Maud as she read it quickly over. They were, indeed, and as her mother said, ruined. The extremely small sum which her mother had brought into the family coffer, and which the defunct Honorable John had been unable to get at and to squander, was barely enough to keep body and soul together, and to pay for some poor, and lowly lodgment; it would just suffice, and only just suffice, to provide her mother with a poor supply of food and raiment; it was scarcely enough for one, and most certainly not enough for two.

"Do not give way to despair, mother," said Maud at last, putting her arm round her mother's neck and kissing her fondly; "it is useless, of course, to deny the truth—

we *must* face it. It is a terrible blow. I pity Lady Wrenford from the bottom of my heart."

"Oh! what does it matter about *them*?" cried Mrs. Berrington. "They have enough to live upon, he says so; but *we*, we must starve."

"It is not so bad as that," said Maud; "there is, at any rate, enough for you; and I am strong, and young. I shall easily get some employment."

"I suppose you will go out as a servant," said her mother, bitterly.

"Well, I hope something better than that can be got," said Maud with a sad smile. "I have had, thanks to you, dearest mother, a good education, and I do not think I shall have much difficulty in getting a place as a governess."

"I don't know, I don't know I am sure," cried her mother querulously. "It is all very dreadful, and very miserable; if you had only taken my advice, and had not been so criminally foolish, we should have been beyond the reach of such terrible straits. Perhaps it is not too late *now*!" she exclaimed, raising herself on her daughter's arm, and looking earnestly in her face, "Lord Livermoor would come back at a word, I know he would; and for your poor mother's sake, dear Maud, for *my* sake, to save me from a wretched old age of want and misery——"

"Not even for your sake, mother, would I so debase myself; I will work for you with all my powers and strength, you *shall* not be in want, but I dare not, I cannot do as you wish; I would rather *die*."

"Ah, me!" sighed her mother, "I know your obstinacy, Maud, you will never give way. I am a poor broken-down woman; do as you wish with me; I feel I shall not be a burden to you long."

And she lay back again in the bed, and pressed her handkerchief to her streaming eyes.

"But, mother, I *must* speak to you; there is so much to be done. We must leave Woodville at once. Mr. Waddell will perhaps get us a tenant for the few months till Christmas. He will not ask for notice, for

he will get a tenant at once. Then there is the furniture——”

“Oh! spare me all this now. How hard-hearted you are, Maud! Cannot you see that my head is whirling? I cannot think of anything. You must leave me to rest, and try and compose myself.”

“Dearest mother, you shall not be troubled about anything, only give me your consent, and I will settle everything.”

“Do as you like, Maud, only leave now, for I am heart-broken—it is more than I can bear.”

And having thus shifted the trouble and responsibility on to her daughter's shoulders, Mrs. Berrington turned her face to the wall, and indulged in the melancholy reflections her sudden reverse of fortune compelled. All the happiness which Mary's intelligence had given her friend Maud, was blown to the four winds of heaven by this crushing misfortune. Even if Mr. Coleson offered to take her to his home, as Mary had said he longed to take her, yet she would not burden him with the support of her mother as well as of herself. If Charles were willing, or even eager to take upon himself such a responsibility—and she felt sure he *would* urge this upon her—she was too proud to be beholden to him in such a way; besides, his mother would have a voice in the matter, and Maud could well imagine that she would object to an arrangement which must bring such a burden upon her son. No, that dream, fair and fond as it had been, must be renounced, and in hard work she must try to forget the happiness which just now had seemed so near to her. The urgency of the case was a merciful relief to her, for the many matters to be arranged which this sudden change in their life involved pressed in upon her, and diverted her mind from the painful thoughts of what might have been; while the care and comforting of her mother, who seemed quite broken down by the blow, and was incapable almost of thought in her distress, gave her ample employ, and kept her from dwelling too long upon the melancholy downfall of her hopes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MAJOR LETS OUT THE CAT.

IN spite of the comforts and even luxuries of The Towers, Alicia Lamley, the feminine head of that well-mounted establishment was not at all happy, nay the very comfort with which she was surrounded, was a not unimportant factor in her discontent with things in general, for the excellent service of house and stable, the sumptuous fare, and the entire absence of anything calling for self-denial were grievous trials to her ascetic mind, occupied as that mind was with pleasing visions of the meritorious hard fare, and the laborious life of the working sisterhood, of which she longed to become a member.

The "Church privileges" too, which St. Philip's easy-going, and sooth to say, somewhat lazy Vicar afforded his parishioners were not enough to satisfy the soul aspirations of the Catholic damsel. Moreover, the house seemed dull now that Dolly was away, and she missed the pleasant badinage, and the more serious confidential communications of that gallant young officer. There was also a marked change in her father's attitude to her. He had been wont of old time to consult her upon every detail of domestic, or social interest, and to bestow large slices of time in enlightening her as to his views upon men and things; but for the last week or two—ever since, in fact, she had urged him to allow her to join the St. Ethelburgh sisterhood—he had seemed almost to have avoided her; indeed, as he passed the morning in his sanctum, and was away from home almost all the afternoon, she only saw him at meal times and during the brief period which intervened between dinner and his final adjournment to the billiard room, where he was wont to discuss sundry cheroots in solitary meditation, or in the perusal of the evening papers. Alicia thought at first, that he was seriously annoyed with her for her insistence upon the St. Ethelburga project, and it *did* seem just a

little selfish of her to want to leave her father, though, as she had pointed out to him, his sister, and her aunt, a somewhat soured spinster of a certain age, and at present vegetating on a small income in the genteel city of Bath, her aunt, Miss Lamley, would be only too glad to take her place in the government of the house. One thing, however, was certain, a kind of cloud had come over the kindly relations of former days, and Alicia was determined to find out what it all meant, and to regain, if possible, her father's confidence, and affection. The idea that Mrs. Laver had anything to do with the somewhat unpleasant state of affairs never entered into her head; for her part she rather disliked Mrs. Laver, the open and out-spoken worldliness of that festive little widow, her frivolous delight in dress, society, and gossip were revolting to the serious-minded Alicia who despised such mundane joys, and failed to give Mrs. Laver the credit she deserved for her kind-heartedness, her unselfishness, and her desire to please, as well as to be pleased. Hence Alicia was unprepared for the shock she received from that arrant gossip and whilom crony of Mrs. Laver's, Major Pilton.

The Major was at a loss how to employ his afternoons, for his usual resort in times of *ennui* had been the drawing-room of the fascinating widow, there, when he felt he had favoured his other friends with, perhaps, too much of his society, and was at a loss where to bend his steps, in that cosy apartment he had been sure of a welcome, and of an appetising refection of the gossip his soul loved, but now, alas! a change had come o'er the spirit of his dream for he found himself out-flanked by the bold strategist Lamley, his old position was occupied by that peremptory individual, and he was shown delicately enough, but in a way which admitted of no mistake, that he was the No. Three who was *not* company. And so the disconsolate Major had to seek other refuges for his vacant hours, and bestowed upon his numerous friends and acquaintances more of his company than had been his wont. Everybody was talking about Mr. Lamley's attentions to the wealthy widow, and speculating

as to when the engagement would be announced, whether she would deem it expedient to wait out the orthodox year of widowhood, or, considering the half-hearted matrimony she had endured for so long, whether she would consent to abridge that decent interval and make Mr. Lamley a happy man within the next month or two. Opinions were much divided on this important subject, and the Major was deeply interested, as was his amiable wont in any matters which concerned his neighbours. He determined, therefore, to pump Miss Lamley on the matter at issue, and to that end he took up a pair of elegant gloves—unaccustomed adornments—and putting on his best hat he sallied forth to The Towers.

Alicia was at home, and she received his name with a sentiment of dislike to the coming interview, for she included the gossiping Major in the same category with the worldly widow, and she took no interest whatever in the items of personal intelligence which formed the staple of Major Pilton's conversation.

"Thought I should find you in, Miss Lamley," said the Major, as he seated himself after shaking hands. "Horrid day—east wind, spitting rain; not much more summer left I'm afraid."

Miss Lamley politely acquiesced in his views as to the weather.

"Saw your father yesterday," he went on. "Met him at Rozel—Mrs. Laver's, you know—nice woman, Mrs. Laver; used to see a great deal of her; no chance for the poor old Major now," and he grinned significantly at Alicia.

Alicia had not the faintest idea as to what this grin of his meant, nor would she encourage him with any word or look of inquiry, for she did not want to be the depository of any of his confidences.

"Two's company, eh?" said the unabashed Major, with a knowing look, as he paused for some recognition of his remarks.

"I do not in the least know what you mean, Major Pilton," said Alicia in a chilling tone.

"Ah! thought so," said the Major to himself, as he

looked curiously at Miss Lamley, "she don't like it; of course she don't; stepmother; give up the keys, and that sort of thing; never *did* like that girl, cold, stuck-up young woman; never could get anything out of her; I'll give her a lesson, by Jove."

And this he proceeded to do with his habitual ignoring of the finer shades of social intercourse.

"Why, don't you see," he went on, "Mr. Lamley has quite cut me out; not in the running at all; handsome man your father, Miss Lamley, and clever; talks remarkably well, too; no chance for the old Major," and he chuckled in a way which shewed that his disappointment was not so severe as to be unendurable.

A strong suspicion as to the Major's meaning now seized hold of Mr. Lamley's daughter; she was dumb-founded, and though she longed to know the full truth, she was too proud to put the question in her mind. The Major, however, needed no such encouragement; he marked the effect of his hints, and he was now thoroughly in his element, and keenly enjoying the astonishment Alicia showed so plainly in her face.

"By Jove!" he said to himself again, "Old Lamley's sly; afraid to tell his daughter; she don't know a word of it; I'll take the liberty of enlightening her."

"Ah!" he said aloud, "your father's a lucky man; no offence, Miss Lamley, no offence; saw there was no chance when *he* appeared on the scenes; handed in my checks at once; gracefully, and with a blush retired, don't you know. Old Commissioner Laver, know all about him; regular screw; rolling in money; and such a nice woman, too, no nonsense about *her*; most suitable match I must say; congratulate your father with all my heart, though it *ought* to be coffee and pistols for two, ha! ha!"

There was no doubt in Miss Lamley's mind as to the Major's meaning now; his jerky sentences, though enigmatical enough taken by themselves, were only too plain to Alicia, and she felt a most uncomfortable sinking at the heart as the Major paused for some recognition of his congratulatory sentences. It was difficult to know

how to answer the grinning, rubicund individual in front of her, and she would have given anything to be rid of his hateful presence, and spared the necessity of replying to his too familiar remarks. If she still persisted in expressing her ignorance as to his meaning it would appear as if her father had taken this serious step in the ordering of his life without telling his daughter anything of the matter, and, though this was indeed the case, Alicia did not want the Major, and, through the Major, the small world of St. Philip's to know, and to comment upon this want of confidence towards her on her father's part; while, on the other hand, if she were to accept Major Pilton's remarkably plain hints and insinuations as covering a truth she now painfully feared, she might be giving countenance to reports which perhaps after all had no more solid foundations than gossip and rumour. As she was debating these weighty matters in her mind, and trying to find out some middle course which would not commit her either way, she was saved further trouble by the entrance of her father himself, who gazed, with much astonishment depicted on his face, at the unwonted spectacle of his daughter Alicia apparently in close conference with the last person in the world he should have expected to have seen in such a position. An uneasy suspicion as to the object of Major Pilton's visit possessed him as he shook hands with that ancient officer, and looked enquiringly at his daughter.

"Thought I was stealing a march on you, Lamley," said the Major, laughingly, "been stealing a lot of marches on *me*; well, well, we can't all be born with silver spoons in our mouths. Wish you joy, I'm sure."

"It is very kind of you to take such an interest in my affairs, Pilton," said Mr. Lamley in a tone of offence; "but I am quite at a loss as to what you refer to."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the obtuse Major, "want to keep your good fortune to yourself, eh? I don't blame you, I don't blame you; should do the same myself under the circumstances. Never was a nasty-tempered man, the Major, eh? eh? what is it? Envy, hatred, malice, and

all uncharitableness ; not a speck of it in his composition ; universal benevolence, takes an interest in everybody does the Major ; rejoices in their good luck, and sympathises in their troubles, eh ? That's what we *ought* to do, eh, Miss Lamley ? so Coleson says ; capital fellow the Bishop, wish him luck in *his* little affections too, poor chap. Well, must be going, I suppose ; I congratulate you with all my heart, Lamley ; and you, too, Miss Lamley ; charming stepmother Mrs. Laver will make to be sure, charming ! ”

And with this the Major rapidly departed, chuckling to himself at the evident consternation his remarks had caused, and before Mr. Lamley had recovered sufficiently from his gasping state of indignation to pour out upon the offending gossip the vials of his wrath.

“ The infernal cad ! the—the abominable—it's—it's beyond words—why, what the deuce did you let that scandalous old humbug come into your drawing-room for, Alicia ? I'm astounded at his impertinence, it's—it's—— ”

“ Oh, father dear ! ” cried Alicia going up to him, and clinging to his arm, “ it is not true ? it cannot be true ? All this that he said ? you are not really—— ? ”

“ Confound the fellow ! How on earth did he—— ? I suppose it is all over this wretched, scandal-mongering hole by now. Well, well, Allie, there's nothing to cry about, my dear,” he said, as Alicia showed evident tokens of distress at his acceptance of the truth of the Major's intelligence. “ Of course, I was going to tell you all about it, and Dolly too ; in fact, I had been discussing this very subject with Julia—with Mrs. Laver, this afternoon, and intended to speak to you this evening. Come, come, Alicia,” he exclaimed, with some annoyance in his tone, and interrupting himself at the sight of his daughter's distress, “ it is too absurd to take it in this way ; there is nothing to warrant all this fuss. There ! there ! do for heaven's sake, be quiet, Allie ; you know how I hate a scene ; and here you are making a most abominable scene, and all about nothing. It's selfish, upon my word, it is ! I did not think it of you, Alicia.”

"I—I—cannot help it, father ; it—is—all so sudden. I had no idea—no thought of such a thing—it has come upon me so—so rudely," sobbed Alicia.

"It is all that abominable, impertinent Paul Prying old Falstaff. I'll—I'll give him a taste of my mind for this ; it is unbearable," cried the discomfited and harassed man, as he tried to soothe his daughter, going up to her, and kissing her, and smoothing down her hair, "I meant to tell you quietly, my dear ; I am sure you are the last person in the world to stand in the way of your father's happiness ; and when you know Ju—Mrs. Laver intimately, as, of course, you soon will know her, you will learn to—to love her, don't you know," he ended somewhat lamely.

"She's very fond of Dolly," he went on, as Alicia continued to press her handkerchief to her eyes, and made no reply, "and Dolly is fond of her ; and she wants to know more of *you*, Alicia. I am *sure* you will like her. You must try to be—er—nice, and that kind of thing, don't you know, for my sake. Anyone could get on with Ju—, with Mrs. Laver, I mean."

"Oh ! father, I will do what is right ; I will try to be all you wish, indeed I will ; but it is all so sudden, so unexpected. I—I—do not realise it all yet—you must give me time."

"Certainly, my dear, certainly," exclaimed Mr. Lamley, delighted to see the end of the storm, "as much time as you like, Alicia. And, by-the-way, you will find Mrs. Laver quite of your mind in a matter in which I am afraid I have been a little—well, obstinate, don't you know—about the Sisterhoods, and all that kind of thing, eh ? Very liberal-minded woman is Ju—er—Mrs. Laver. She quite approves of your unselfish devotion, as she calls it. Upon my word, her very words, 'unselfish devotion' she said, and she has almost converted me, by Jove ! Eh ! who's there ?" he cried, as he heard footsteps approaching the door. "It's Jarvis, Allie !" he said in a low tone. "For heaven's sake ! compose yourself. What is it, Jarvis ?" he asked, irritably, as the butler entered with a salver in his hand.

"Telegram, Sir," said Jarvis, presenting the salver to his master.

"Telegram!" exclaimed Mr. Lamley, as Jarvis withdrew. "Why, what on earth? Great heavens, Alicia!" he cried, as he tore open the despatch and rapidly mastered the contents. "Your brother—Dolly—thrown and hurt! Here, Jarvis, Jarvis! Tell them to bring round the brougham at once, at once; and see my things packed. I must start at once. Poor fellow! poor fellow! And we parted on bad terms! Great heavens! if anything should happen! My poor boy!"

"Oh! father, it is terrible!" cried Alicia, as she stood crumpling up in her hands the telegram which she had picked up from the floor and read. "Poor Dolly! dear boy! to think of him lying there among strangers; it says, 'a bad fall,' and 'much hurt.' Oh! I hope and pray it may not be as bad as——"

"It is a frightful affair, Alicia; I must get to the poor fellow as soon as I can. Run and get me the Bradshaw, while I write to Julia; she will be terribly upset."

"Father, dear, you will not go alone? You will not leave me here alone? I could not bear it. Do, do let me go with you! I will not hinder you a minute; I will be ready in a moment. Oh! pray, pray, let me go with you!" cried Alicia, holding her father's coat-sleeve. "There is no one to nurse him, and I could not bear to think of Dolly in the hands of strangers."

"Well, perhaps it would be better," said Mr. Lamley, after a moment's thought; "yes, you can come, Alicia; only be ready. I cannot wait for anything; and bring me the train book at once. Poor fellow, poor boy," and Mr. Lamley sighed heavily as he turned to a writing table to inform Mrs. Laver in a few brief lines as to the misfortune which had befallen.

GEORGE LAMBERT.

(To be continued.)

The Girl Widow.

"So Anapé has given up its dead!" cried Fane, bursting without ceremony into Coghlan's quarters.

"And Jack Morant is on his way home in the *Egeria*," responded Coghlan, waving his pipe hospitably towards a long chair and a long tumbler. "Startling, but true Hartley had a wire from Jack himself this morning."

The visitor sat down and drew a long breath. "Then he's been two—no, three years in the clutches of the Anapé warriors. Whew—w! Wonder why they kept him alive so long."

"Had vague ideas of making him useful one of these days, probably. Case of Slatin and the Khalifa over again."

"And how about the faithful Gundra, who gave us such a touching account of his master's burying? Thought to get substantial reward for his fidelity out of Jack's people, I suppose—the rascal! Is Mrs. Morant still alive, by the way?" Coghlan nodded. "Only near relative Jack possesses, isn't she?"

"No, there's a sister—I knew her once, for my sins. Extremely superior young woman—read Hebrew fluently, despised dances and the British soldier, and married a schoolmaster of sorts. *She* won't gush unduly over old Jack's return. But it's awfully good news for the mother——"

"And that girl at St. Bede's."

"What girl at St. Bede's?"

"Don't you remember her? Miss Marchmont—Chrissie or Kitty Marchmont. Lived with an ancient female—her aunt or grandmother, or something—in the Close. Rather pretty—with a lot of light curly hair. After she put on mourning for Jack——"

"What the dickens did she do that for?"

"Seeing she was engaged to him—My dear chap!" as Coghlan shook a close-cropped head incredulously, "I tell you, it's a fact! Everybody in St. Bede's knew it; our fellows used to call her the girl widow. She looked ripping in her little black bonnet."

"Well, Morant must have fallen a prey after I went to the Staff College. This is the first word I've heard of the affair."

"Very likely. In your time the charmer had hardly got into long frocks."

"Seen her lately?"

"Not for over two years. Daresay she's married a minor canon before now."

"In which case it's to be hoped that the rigours of Jack's captivity have had the effect of dulling his—er—tender recollections," observed Coghlan.

It seemed—accepting Captain Morant's movements, on his arrival in England, as indicative of his sentiments—that three years spent in the huts of the Anapiri had effectively lessened his interest in the girl he left behind him; for, while forward to visit his mother in Sussex, and his old regiment at Chatham, he made no motion to go down to St. Bede's. Fane, however, who was of an imaginative turn, gave a different interpretation of the returned hero's conduct.

"There *is* a minor canon," he declared confidently to Coghlan. "And he knows it, poor chap!"

Thenceforward those two good fellows avoided all references likely to jar upon "old Jack's" presumably wounded feelings. It was that young ass Hartley who, on the second occasion of Morant's dining with the 150th, suddenly blurted out—"By the way, Jack, I was down at the Kerslakes' last week; remember the Kerslakes? Cricket match on, all St. Bede's had turned out—lots of inquiries for you. Miss Marchmont was there—looking radiant, of course; I took her into tea, and—I say, how confoundedly hot the curry is!" this in obedience to a warning kick under the table from Fane. "Give me some water, for the love of heaven."

Fane, hastily passing the water bottle, began to talk fast about a prospective polo match, and the dangerous subject dropped. Save for a passing expression of perplexity (which crossed his face on Hartley's first mention of Miss Marchmont's name), Morant had all along preserved a semblance of perfect calm.

But the puzzled look showed itself again in his eyes next day, when a lady—an old St. Bede's acquaintance whom he encountered in the Park—said to him, "You can't think how delighted we all were to hear of your wonderful escape! I had to relieve excited feeling by sending a telegram of congratulation to Miss Marchmont. I daresay I oughtn't to have done that, as it is supposed to be a secret; but I really couldn't help myself! Is she in town just now?"

"Not that—not that I'm aware of." Captain Morant, searching his memory for some recollection of a lady whom, it was clear, he ought to remember, stumbled in his speech.

Mrs. St. George involuntarily raised her pretty eyebrows. Then she broke into a faint laugh. "Well! you, of all people, should know! Mind you bring her to see me, when she does come up."

Morant pursued his way to Hyde Park Corner in much bewilderment. What on earth did the woman mean by her congratulatory telegrams and her enigmatic smiles? Marchmont? Marchmont? The name sounded vaguely familiar. Now he came to think of it, someone—Hartley, he believed—had spoken last night of a Miss Marchmont, in the same significant tone.

Deuced odd! Here was a mystery—which had better be cleared up. He resolved to take an early opportunity of questioning Hartley.

But a letter from his sister which he presently found awaiting him at the club, rendered application to Hartley unnecessary.

Mrs. Everett wrote (from Pontresina, where she and her schoolmaster were enjoying their annual holiday), to communicate the startling intelligence that there was at St. Bede's a young woman—"I cannot call her a lady,

although Canon Lydiard assures me that she occupies a recognised social position"—who had for three years past been masquerading in the character of Captain Morant's affianced bride. "I use the word 'masquerading' advisedly," Flora explained, "as I feel certain that, had you ever been engaged to any girl at St. Bede's, you would have informed me of the fact. I expressed strong conviction on this point to the Lydiards—from Mrs. Lydiard, who is providentially staying in our hotel with her husband, I first learned by accident the unscrupulous use that is being made of your name—adding that I thought it extremely unlikely you were even acquainted with the young person who audaciously lays claim to you. Her name is Christina Marchmont. She is without parents, and makes her home with a bedridden aunt at No. 3, Close Cottages—a kind of clerical almshouse connected with the Cathedral in which Dr. Lydiard——"

Morant flung the closely written document he held upon the table—half laughing. "*Now* I understand why the name sounded familiar! Marchmont—of course! The Dean's daughters called her 'Kitty.' Fair-haired girl; rather good dancer; had her abode in one of those queer gabled buildings adjoining the cloisters. I've a hazy remembrance of once driving her home from a picnic. Apparently *she* had a more vivid remembrance of that drive." The speaker glanced at his reflection in the glass opposite him with a faint, conscious smile—which changed suddenly into a sigh. "She'd find me woefully altered, if she were to see me now," he ejaculated, picking up his letter again—and resuming perusal at the sheet which came uppermost.

"Under these circumstances, Sidney quite thinks with me that you should at once place the matter in the hands of your solicitor—" ("Much obliged to Sidney, I'll be hanged if I do anything of the kind!") "instructing him to warn Miss Marchmont that, if she persists in her unfounded statements, she will expose herself to severe penalties. This, we both feel persuaded, is your only safe course. To enter into any direct communication with so unprincipled a woman would be highly dangerous.

Let me entreat you, therefore, dear Jack, if you are plagued by letters from this creature, to leave them unanswered. And, above all things, refuse resolutely to be entrapped into a meeting."

If Mrs. Everett knew much of Hebrew, she knew little of average human nature. But for her officious counsel, Morant would never have dreamed of confronting the mendacious Miss Marchmont in person. Now he thrust well-intentioned advice into a drawer, and turned angrily in search of a "Bradshaw."

"I presume Flora considers me a boy of sixteen—unable to take care of myself—that she comes that solemn ass Sidney over me in this fashion. Pretty counsel he gives, too. I think I see myself bringing Chamberlain and Morris into this idiotic business! I'll go down and talk to the girl—a silly chit of a child, whose head has probably been turned by yellowbacks from the circulating library—talk to her like a heavy father, and give her a fright that will teach her to tell no more fibs in future. I suppose she had some girlish fancy for me, poor little thing—the mourning looks like it—and persuaded herself. I shall certainly go down to St. Bede's at once."

He went. But, once fairly on his road, his mood changed considerably. He remembered that, three years having passed since his last meeting with Miss Marchmont, that young lady could no longer be described as "a chit"; and he began to doubt whether he had done wisely in seeking an interview with her. Supposing she were indeed desirous (as Flora believed) of establishing a claim upon him, this visit would count as so much evidence in support of her claim.

There was no doubt about it; he had started on a fool's errand. Still, having started, he held it shameful to draw back. With teeth metaphorically set, and nerves braced to face and defy the wiles of an adventuress, he alighted at St. Bede's and walked straight to 3, Close Cottages.

The door of that diminutive residence was opened to him by an elderly maidservant, who, on hearing his name, expanded into a broad grin of sympathetic delight.

"I'll tell Miss Kitty directly, Sir."

"In the unholy secret, evidently," said Morant gloomily to himself. Not without strong apprehension did he, at the accomplice's bidding, take a seat in the tiny drawing room—no contemptible resting-place on a hot summer afternoon, so neat was it, so dainty, so quaintly attractive with its worn spindle-legged furniture and bowls of wild flowers fresh from the hedges—to await "Miss Kitty's" advent.

"Don't believe I should know her if I met her in the street!" he reflected. "I can just remember a great deal of light hair. But light hair's no longer the mode. Probably her's has taken on the fashionable shade of red."

Further consideration of probabilities was here cut short by the opening of the door, and the hesitating appearance in the doorway of a slender figure in pink cambric.

Morant rose. "Miss Christina Marchmont?"

"Yes." The apparition fingered the door-handle, and looked half inclined to run away. "I—the servant told me—Oh!" in a tone of intense relief, making a step into the room, "it *is* you, yourself! I didn't recognise you at first."

Morant muttered something about "three years in West Africa," and Miss Marchmont shut the door. Then she resumed, turning an alarmingly pale face upon her visitor, who found himself fervently hoping she wasn't going to faint.

"I was afraid you had sent someone else down—some stranger. Ever since I met Mr. Hartley at the cricket match I've been in hourly dread of *your* coming. But a stranger would have been even worse."

"I never thought of sending a stranger," Morant protested, almost eagerly. He felt at a loss how to meet these very unexpected tactics on the part of the enemy. "But—but as I'd heard—er—certain rumours—exaggerations of the truth, I daresay! I—the best plan seemed to come straight to you and—and inquire."

Miss Marchmont dropped into a chair, and waved a

small trembling hand towards that from which her visitor had lately risen.

"Won't you sit down?" she pleaded. "Please do! It—it seems less angry."

Morant sat down, taking note, as he did so, that Miss Marchmont was a very pretty girl, who had not dyed her hair since their last meeting; and here ensued a moment's silence, while the lady twisted her fingers nervously in her lap, and fixed a troubled gaze upon the carpet.

"I don't know what to say!" she exclaimed at length, looking up, and revealing a pair of large grey eyes full of tears. "Of course, I did wrong, very wrong, and I'm dreadfully sorry. * But indeed, *indeed*, Captain Morant, I was only seventeen when I began, and having begun, I *had* to go on."

"Perhaps," remarked Jack, with a fine paternal severity, "you can explain how you came to—to begin?"

Miss Marchmont reflected.

"I think it was Mabel Owen who first put the idea into my head—and that drive. Do you remember driving me home after the Kerslakes' picnic?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, Mabel met us on the road; and next day she began talking nonsense—asking if I was engaged to you, and so on." Miss Marchmont's cheeks, in which the colour had been gradually rising during the last few minutes, now matched her gown to admiration. "And when I told her 'No,' she persisted—'But you will be soon, I'm sure!'"

"Upon which you answered——?"

"Nothing. It was awfully false of me, for I knew quite well that you'd only asked me to drive out of good nature, because Maud Thomson was so disagreeable about making room for me on the coach. But—but I rather liked people to think you admired me; it made me almost of importance for once, and I was *so* tired of being always overlooked—always left out of everything—and only asked to tea when people were 'quite alone,' or wanted help with their G.F.S. girls. I know it sounds horribly silly, but when Mrs. Crewe offered to take me

to the Militia dance, and Lady Jane Lewin invited me to her big garden-party, I literally *cried* with pleasure! And I owed both those parties to Mabel's foolish talk about you and the dogcart. I know that doesn't excuse me," with a deep sigh.

Morant bit his lip, and cleared his throat. "And, after I was supposed dead? Did the same motive influence your procedure then?"

"Partly. At first, just at first, when you went away, I was very sorry, not that I really *cared*, you know——"

Morant nodded somewhat grimly. Then, as an afterthought, he smiled. "I understand."

"And in six weeks came the news of the battle. It so happened that my great-uncle—Aunt Elizabeth's brother—died about the same time. And when Mabel Owen met me out walking, she jumped to the conclusion that my new black was for you."

"Ah! Did she—mention her conclusion?"

"She squeezed my hand and whispered, 'Oh, you poor darling! You never would acknowledge anything, but I felt sure matters were settled before he left.' Why, *why* didn't I contradict her at once?" said Miss Marchmont, with something like a sob.

"It would have been the more honest course," rejoined Jack the moralist, who had grown brave as a lion during the last five minutes. "And, forgive me, the rest of your friends and neighbours? What explanation did you offer them?"

"None. I had no occasion to explain; I was never asked any questions. You see"—the culprit's eyes twinkled irresistibly through her tears—"as it wasn't an acknowledged engagement, people couldn't speak of it. They only treated me with silent sympathy. Oh!" the pretty lips curved suddenly into a smile, "it was very funny sometimes!"

"I've no doubt of that."

"That is, for a little while—till I realised what I'd done. Then I was horribly ashamed, and miserable beyond words."

"Yet you still went on wearing mourning?"

"I didn't dare leave it off! Aunt Elizabeth lost her *fiancé* when she was only twenty, and she has worn black for him all her life."

"And expected you to do the same? I see! . Didn't you get tired of perpetual black frocks?"

"Dreadfully. Latterly I quite hated them—particularly in hot weather."

"It must have been a relief to find I was alive," said Captain Morant, gravely.

"I went straight out and bought this cotton"—glancing down at her pink skirt. "It was so nice to feel I *might*. Of course, I was very glad to know you had escaped," she added hurriedly.

"Thanks. You're awfully kind."

"Don't laugh at me, please!" The girl's lip quivered. "If you knew how I've dreaded seeing you, you'd wonder I could be glad at all. Night after night I've lain awake, wondering how I should find courage to look you in the face." She got up nervously, pushing back her chair.

Morant rose also. "I hope you haven't found me as formidable as you expected. And—look here, Miss Marchmont! Don't go on calling yourself hard names. You were a child three years ago. I give you my word of honour that I look upon the whole thing as a mere bit of childish mischief. I shall dismiss it from my memory."

"Ah! but you haven't got to undeceive St. Bede's!" Miss Marchmont interrupted mournfully. "That's the dreadful part. However kind *you* may be, other people won't make allowances."

"I forgot; that *is* rough on you." Jack pulled his moustache reflectively. ("Poor little soul! I suppose every clergywoman in the place will cut her; no G.F.S. teas, even, in future!) I wish I could spare you the ordeal," he added aloud.

She shook her head. "You're very, very good. But that's impossible. Unless, indeed"—a faint gleam of hope illumining her downcast face—"you would be satisfied with my telling *Mabel* the truth, and authorising her

to tell the rest? I would go to her directly ; this very afternoon, if you like."

Morant held up a deprecating hand. "No, no! don't be in a hurry! Always a mistake to be in a hurry. Let's see if we can't devise some better plan. Suppose, for instance—yes, that would do! Suppose you abstain from all indiscreet revelations and explanations, leave people undisturbed in the belief they have been cherishing—my coming down to-day will have confirmed them in *that*——"

"Does anyone know you have come?" she interposed, anxiously.

"I met half-a-dozen ladies who know me by sight, on my way up from the station. Pray don't distress yourself on that score! According to my plan, it's better my presence in the place *should* be bruited abroad."

"What is your plan?"

"Simply this. That we should—quarrel."

"Quarrel?"—in utter bewilderment.

"Don't you grasp the idea? My three years' sojourn among savages has, naturally enough, altered me in all respects for the worse. I come down to see you; you are startled, disappointed, perhaps even repelled. But you are loyal, and you do your best, for a while, to endure me. The task, however, proves too much for you. After a few days of perpetual 'misunderstandings,' we come to the conclusion that we are no longer suited to one another, and our engagement is broken off by mutual consent. That'll be good enough for St. Bede's, won't it?"

He paused, glowing with modest pride in his own ingenuity. His companion clasped her hands, gazing at him through a fresh rush of tears. "You are the most generous man who ever lived!" she exclaimed, with enthusiasm.

"You think the plan would work?"

"It's splendid—magnificent! I can never thank you enough."

"Then I'll wire to town for my things, and see about a room. I daresay they can take me in at the 'King's Head.'"

"But it will be a great bore for you—staying down here! Is it necessary—to the plan—that you should stay?"

"Positively necessary. We could hardly, with any semblance of plausibility, begin to bicker on the very day of our reunion."

Christina Marchmont laughed outright. "No, I suppose that wouldn't do."

"I will therefore, as I said, take up my quarters at the 'King's Head.' It's conveniently near, and, for the next few days, it will be advisable that we should show ourselves in public pretty often. Is Savory's still in existence?"

"The confectioner's in Rendel Street? Oh, yes!"

"Then I propose that you allow me to take you to tea there this afternoon. To-morrow's Sunday, isn't it? I had better go to church with you in the morning, and we can have a walk later."

"All this will be a great tax upon your time," observed Miss Marchmont demurely. "One comfort is, you needn't talk to me, after the first. If you are silent and morose, people will see for themselves that we are not getting on."

"And our purpose will be thereby furthered. Just so." Morant looked at his watch. "Four o'clock. Would five suit you for tea? Right. Then I'll go and secure that room, and be back in an hour's time."

Punctually to the moment he returned, to find Miss Marchmont awaiting him in a flowered hat (very becoming to her fresh face), and much excitement. Apart from the interest of playing her part in a highly original comedy, the prospect of tea at Savory's was an exciting one to the girl. Savory's was "smart"—as smart as anything in sleepy St. Bede's could be—and Kitty had never passed its plate-glass portals in her life. Relieved from the dread that had long beset her, she would positively have enjoyed her walk through the town in Captain Morant's company, but for one drawback—that of having to meet and greet her acquaintance, while he stood by observant.

Morant himself appeared to relish these encounters. "Now they're off to spread the great news abroad through the city," he remarked with satisfaction, on parting with the Misses Pollock at the corner of Rendel Street. "And here's Savory's—full, I'm glad to see."

Miss Marchmont did not share her escort's pleasure at sight of the crowded restaurant. The significant smiles, the covert hand-pressures of her dear friends at the little marble tables between which she had to pass, were very painful to her. Not till she had been fully five minutes engaged with tea and strawberries did her youthful spirits begin to reassert themselves.

"Rather different this—from Anapé," observed her escort, with a smiling glance at her radiant face.

"I should like to hear something about Anapé," was her rejoinder.

Morant bent forward.

"Is that observation made in character?"

Miss Marchmont coloured slightly.

"No, I was speaking for myself, then."

This reply seemed to gratify Captain Morant. He waxed eloquent on the subject of the Anapiri—and a whole hour had passed pleasantly before he and his companion thought of quitting Savory's.

"I am afraid," Kitty Marchmont said, as they bent their steps towards The Close, "that we didn't have any morose silences this afternoon."

"All in good time. It wouldn't have done to begin that kind of thing immediately."

The pair stood at Miss Bennett's wicket-gate.

"Shall I stroll round to see you after dinner?" inquired Morant. "I believe that's what I ought to do—under the circumstances."

Miss Marchmont thought he might spare himself the trouble. Aunt Elizabeth, in her bed, would never know whether he came or not; and there was nobody else in the house—except Kate.

"Who will indulge in endless comments to her gossips on my non-appearance—if I don't turn up. You had

better let me do the regular thing. And, one word more. There's the question of names to be considered."

"Names?"

"I mean Christian names. You won't be offended if, in public, I find it necessary to address you as 'Kitty'? I am afraid 'Miss Marchmont' might raise suspicion."

"Oh! no, I shan't mind. You must do what you think wisest, of course."

She seemed afraid to dispute his judgment that evening. But she did find courage to dispute it next day, when, having first attended her to morning service, he proposed that they should spend the afternoon in a walk over the neighbouring downs.

"What's the use of going out into the country, where nobody can see us?" she objected.

"We shall be seen to go, and come back. No one," Captain Morant asserted with conviction, "would expect us to spend our first Sunday together anywhere *but* in the country."

The rural walk was taken; and Captain Morant continued to pay his after-dinner visits to Miss Marchmont in her great-aunt's garden with praiseworthy regularity. After a while he added to these other and more informal calls, made, for the most part, in the early morning, when Kitty was busy in her daily occupation of dusting the old china and "doing" the flowers, and he insisted on his pseudo-*fiancée's* driving with him in the dogcart he had hired from the "King's Head" stables.

"Everyone knows I've got the thing, and it would look uncommonly strange if I *didn't* take you out," he argued, plausibly.

At the end of a week Miss Marchmont expressed a polite fear that Captain Morant's generous concern for her must be interfering with his engagements.

"Surely enough has been done now to hoodwink the public!" she observed with some bitterness. "I think you might safely go back to town to-morrow."

"We've got to quarrel first, remember!" Captain Morant responded from the depths of a garden chair.

"So far, no one has the smallest idea that we are not a couple of infatuated sentimentalists, absorbed in each other's perfections."

"That's true," Kitty assented. "Well, this afternoon I shall turn my shoulder to you, and refuse to speak during the whole course of the drive!"

But when the afternoon came, she forgot her stern resolution.

"This won't do at all!" she ejaculated mournfully, on alighting at Close Cottages. "We *must* make an effort. Come over presently in a savage temper, please!"

Perhaps Captain Morant laid this appeal to heart. Certainly his countenance, when he re-appeared three hours later, wore a gloomy aspect.

"Who's the man I met coming away just now?" he demanded abruptly.

"Just now?" Kitty repeated innocently. "As you came through the garden? Oh, that's Willie Holcroft! Don't you know him? Such a nice fellow! He came in to tell me about the Cumberleigh cricket week—he plays for Loamshire—and stayed to help bud the roses. We've done no end of work in the rose-bed since tea."

Morant frowned.

"One of the Withrington Holcrofts, I suppose? Can't say I ever cared much for those chaps."

"I don't care for George or Tony, myself. But Willie's charming—and so good-natured. He has promised to mow the lawn for me to-morrow."

Morant took a few steps away from his companion, then turned abruptly back.

"Look here, I don't want to annoy you! But—but I'm a good deal older than you are——"

Kitty assented serenely.

"And I must ask, do you think it's wise, considering the circumstances, to encourage this young fellow's admiration?"

"I really haven't thought about the matter." Miss Marchmont spoke with fine nonchalance. "But I don't see why I shouldn't encourage it, if I please."

"Don't you? When a girl is engaged to one man——"

"But I'm not engaged to any man!"

Morant stood abashed.

"I beg your pardon! I forgot for a moment——"

"That we were only—play-acting?"

The girl's gay tones were not quite steady; but she rallied herself with a laugh.

"Never mind, Captain Morant! We wanted a bone of contention, you know; here is one ready-made for us. You object to Mr. Holcroft's mowing my lawn. I defy your objection; we quarrel, we part."

The laughing voice died down suddenly, as Jack Morant laid his hand on the speaker's arm.

"I hate quarrelling!" he declared vehemently. "And it's clear we're bad hands at it, you and I. Here we've been ten whole days unable get up a single tiff! Don't you think it would be less trouble, on the whole, to let the present arrangement stand?"

The arrangement still "stands"—indeed, it has for a year past been merged in one more permanent—and Jack's brother officers (with whom his wife is exceedingly popular) are pleased to regard it with cordial approbation. Only Mrs. Everett, who does not share the general enthusiasm inspired by her sister-in-law's charms, shakes her head (in private) over "John's imprudent marriage."

"There must have been some reason for his extraordinary reticence," she tells her schoolmaster. "If he was engaged before he went to Anapé, why didn't he say so?"

The schoolmaster felt himself fairly posed by this question. Captain Morant is the only person really in a position to answer it; and he shows no disposition to be communicative on the subject.

CONSTANCE SMITH.

Limerick, Old and New.

PART I.

THE city of Limerick, sometimes described as "the fairest city of Munster," is situated on the River Shannon, about 60 miles from its mouth, and 129 miles W.S.W. of Dublin.

It stands in a country rich in agricultural and mineral products, and boasts of one of the largest salmon fisheries in the world. The broad river, which though poetically spoken of as "blue," is rather a clear grey, takes its rise in Leitrim, flowing out of Lough Allen, which is surrounded by lofty hills abounding in coal and iron. Advancing thence, it washes the county of Roscommon, and expands into the great Lough Ree, which is 20 miles long and 4 miles broad. Proceeding on its way, it passes through Tipperary and Galway to Portumna. Then it goes through Lough Derg to Killaloe. Nine miles from Limerick its bed bristles with rocks, piled one upon the other, which for nearly a quarter of a mile break the current, and form the falls of Doonas. Here, says a recent writer, "the whole body of the river, 40 feet deep and 300 yards wide, surges in one tumultuous roar over the jagged rocks with mighty force, superior to any Welsh waterfall, resembling the rapids of St. Lawrence." It *may* be so at certain seasons, but there was no "tumultuous roar" when the writer visited the place. The total fall, however, from Doonas to Limerick is 97 feet. Above the city, the river expands into an estuary, and from its source till it empties itself into the Atlantic

Ocean, so numerous are its windings, that it traverses a distance of 240 miles.

The country around presents a peaceful aspect, the river—rarely ruffled by the passing of a boat—flowing between rich pasture lands, with masses of foliage undulating as far as a chain of low wooded hills, behind which rise the mountains of Clare; and it is not too much to say that as seen from the tower of the cathedral, the ancient city, with its venerable castle and ruined walls, its curious bridges and quaint streets, with houses falling to decay, together with the more modern structures of the new town, form a picturesque combination interesting to the antiquarian, the historian and the observant tourist. Here are relics of by-gone ages which awaken thought and inquiry; here are the scenes of fierce conflicts and protracted sieges; and here, too, are charming spots, amid which the visitor may spend many a delightful hour in quiet rest or pleasant reverie.

There can be no doubt that its favourable situation—navigation being possible into the very heart of the town—was early recognised; and the fact that just below the present Thomond Bridge the Shannon is fordable at low tide, while vessels of 600 tons burden can moor at its quays at spring tides, may have determined its selection as the site of the original city. The Danes during their long wanderings found here not only a rich soil and a genial climate, but also peculiar facilities for military and commercial enterprise, the noble river enabling them to bring their ships into the interior of the country, whence they could pursue their ravages, and gather together vast stores of wealth.

The origin of the name *Limerick* is somewhat obscure. The ancient form, *Luimenach*, occurs in the annals long before the city was founded, and appears to have been first applied to the estuary of the Shannon. Mr. Maurice Lenihan in his elaborate work entitled “The History of Limerick” (which has long been out of print), states on the authority of a very old legend, preserved in the books of Leccan and Ballymote, that the name originated in the following way: Two gladiators were competing here

in single combat for the championship of Munster and Connaught. The hosts on both sides were clad in grey-green *luimins* (cloaks). When the combat commenced, and the assembled crowds pressed round to see and enjoy it, the heat became so great that they threw off their *luimins* in heaps on the strand. Their attention was so intently engaged by the combatants that they did not perceive the flowing of the tide until it had swept the cloaks away, upon which some of the spectators exclaimed, "Is Luimenochola in t-inbhear anossa," i.e., *cloaky (or cloakful) is the river now*. Hence the name *Luimenach*. Another derivation is given by Hollinshed, which is regarded as apocryphal, viz., that prior to the foundation of the city the site was an island stored with grass, upon which an Irish potentate encamped while waging war with another native king. The numerous cavalry horses which he brought with him are said to have eaten up all the grass in twenty-four hours. Hence the place was called *Loum-ne-augh*, i.e., "made bare, or eaten up by horses."

But if the origin of the name is obscure, so also is the origin of the city to which it was subsequently given. Some think that it was the *Regia* of Ptolemy; but whether this be correct or not, it was known to the Annalists before the Danish invasion. A battle was fought here in the early part of the third century, and about 100 years after, one of the most ancient kings of Ireland, named Crimthan, is said to have died as he approached the city, poisoned by his sister, who wished to place her own son upon the throne.

St. Patrick came hither in A.D. 434, and founded several churches in the district, ordaining St. Manchin as the first Bishop of Limerick. In the near neighbourhood—at Singland—this time-honoured saint is reported to have had a vision of an angel. A holy well, a stony bed, and an altar, named after him, are still pointed out to the visitor, the stone of the altar being worn, it is said, by his constant kneeling, and certainly by the daily devotions of those who repair to the shrine. All three are situated in a small field, at a short distance from the

main road ; and here, probably, the visitor may find, as the writer did, a woman at the well—the nearest approach to an angel—ready to give him a draught of water, and pronounce a blessing on his head.

But though the name *Luimenach* was originally applied to the Lower Shannon, and continued to be so applied up to 843 A.D., it was evidently transferred shortly after to the fortress erected here by the Danes, who about the middle of the ninth century made this spot one of their chief maritime stations, surrounding it with walls and towers, enclosing the area now known as the English Town. Previous to this they had appeared in Ireland, bent on plunder, but now their visits were of a more formal and formidable character. Advancing up the Luimenach, they anchored at what is now known as *King's Island*, and began to ravage the surrounding country. Evidently they were well satisfied with their explorations, for they returned soon after with still larger forces, and began to fortify themselves in their new acquisition. Thus Limerick became a Danish colony, whence they could pursue their depredations ; and as the native chieftains were engaged in constant strife with each other, the invaders succeeded in doing considerable mischief. They spared neither age nor sex. They determined to extinguish both learning and religion ; and to this end they burnt monasteries containing valuable manuscripts, they put to death the clergy at the altar and the monks in their cells, and they set up their own deities, Odin and Thor, in the place of Christ. It is painful to reflect that all this might have been checked, if not prevented, if there had been more union among the Irish themselves ; but sometimes these were found in alliance with the invaders against their own countrymen.

As an instance of the boldness of these marauders it may be mentioned that, penetrating to Armagh, they seized the Primate, his people, and his relics, and conveyed them to their fleet at Luimenach.

Of course they were not always successful. In 901 King Cormac ascended the throne of Munster, and curbed their aggressions ; but at his death they resumed

their ravages, showing their hatred of Christianity by wholesale massacres of the saints. In 945 Callachan, King of Cashel, succeeded in uniting most of the southern chiefs, in order to strike a decisive blow for the deliverance of his countrymen from their cruel and unscrupulous oppressors. The result showed that when the Irish were united, they could be as brave and determined as their opponents. Limerick being the seat of the enemy's power was chosen as the point of attack. The conflict was fierce, and resulted in the death of the Danish chief; but though the Irish were victorious, they allowed the Danes to retain possession of the city, governed by their own rulers and their own laws, simply stipulating for hostages and an annual tribute. A few years later (969 A.D.), these rapacious foreigners sustained another defeat near the present Limerick Junction. Three thousand were slain in battle, and the remainder fled to Limerick. But defence was in vain. The city was attacked, plundered, and burnt to the ground. One would have thought that so crushing a defeat would have paralysed them; but soon after fresh hordes of Danes made their appearance. The city was rebuilt, and became as formidable as ever. But their final overthrow was at hand. In 975 they were again defeated, and their city reduced to ashes; and finally, in 1014, the nation at large was relieved of its oppressors at the battle of Clontarf, through the valour of Brian the Brave, who, alas! sealed the conquest with his own blood. For 300 years they had been ravaging the country. Henceforth, by degrees those that remained amalgamated with the natives, and so lost their identity. For a time, however, they retained their own rites and superstitions; but in the eleventh century they embraced Christianity and elected a bishop.

Conflicts with the Danes were succeeded by a fratricidal struggle, and for some years Limerick was the scene of civil war. In 1063 it was once more burnt to the ground. In 1106 the seat of royalty in Munster was removed by Murtogh from Cashel to Limerick, and henceforth, till its conquest by the English, his successors

were styled indiscriminately Kings of Thomond or Kings of Limerick. In 1164 Daniel or Donald O'Brian (surnamed "the Great") became King of Limerick. Under him the city enjoyed some measure of peace and prosperity; but it was of short duration, for five years later (1169) the Normans invaded the land, and the Irish being split up in rival bands could not unite to repel them. The invaders had no difficulty, therefore, in obtaining a sure footing, and when Henry II. arrived in person the numerous chieftains were prepared to submit to his rule. Among the first of these was Donald, King of Limerick. He agreed to surrender the city to Henry, and hold his kingdom as a fief from the English King; but his submission was of short duration, for as soon as Henry had departed, he renounced his allegiance, and drove the intruders out of the city (A.D. 1174). The next year it was recaptured by Raymond le Gros, and invested by a garrison. Donald renewed his submission to Henry, and gave hostages as a proof of his sincerity. But on the death of Strongbow he reasserted his authority. The English were compelled to withdraw, and by Donald's own order the bridges were broken down and the city burnt to the ground, that it might never again "become a nest of foreigners." In 1194 Donald presented the Church with his palace, which was converted into a cathedral, and dedicated to St. Mary; and during the same year he died. He also erected the Cathedral of Killaloe, within whose walls he was buried, and has the credit of founding or endowing eighteen monasteries and numerous abbeys. He reigned twenty-six years in all, and was undoubtedly the foremost leader of his age, and the most formidable opponent whom the English encountered. His death must have been regarded by his people as a great calamity, for in the confusion that followed it the English regained possession of the city, and though they were soon driven out again, their expulsion was only temporary, and from this time forward, for more than 400 years, they were practically the rulers of the land.

The limits of our space forbid a detailed history of the

centuries following Donald's decease. A few incidents only must suffice.

In 1210, King John visited Ireland, and divided the conquered portions into twelve counties, of which the district in which Limerick is situated was one. The position of the city appears to have delighted him, and he set to work to improve and fortify it. He erected a noble castle, which still bears his name, and which is undoubtedly one of the finest specimens of Norman architecture in Ireland. He also caused a level bridge with fourteen arches to be constructed, called Thomond Bridge, crossing the main arm of the Shannon, in close proximity to the castle, the cost of which is said to have been £30. This bridge is not standing now, a new one having been built in 1840, at the cost of £9000. But it must have been a substantial structure to have withstood so long the ravages of time. This visit of King John to Limerick is worthy of special notice, as it has been the only visit ever paid to the city by an English monarch; and from that time it grew in importance. Large numbers of English took up their residence in the city, upon whom great privileges were conferred; and money was coined here, though it was not till 1467 that a mint was established.

In 1316, Edward Bruce, who sought, like his brother, to win a kingdom for himself, entered Limerick on the 21st September, and held his court there until the following Easter. But his triumph was of short duration. He was crowned King of Ireland, but did not live long to enjoy his newly-acquired dignity; for in 1318 he was slain. During the fifteenth century the fortifications of Limerick were considerably extended, and in the reign of Elizabeth it was described as a city well and substantially built, whose walls extended round a circuit of three miles. Its militia amounted to 800 men, being twice the number at Cork, and a third more than those at Waterford. It was, therefore, the most important city in the island next to Dublin.

While James I. occupied the English throne, Limerick enjoyed much peace and prosperity; but in 1641, so great

was the misery endured by the great mass of the people, under the grinding tyranny of Strafford, that a plot was formed to expel the English, and restore to the Irish the lands which had formerly belonged to them. The Irish, with their confederates, marched on Limerick, which was not prepared to repel them. Nor were the citizens eager to do so. On the contrary, they threw open the gates, and welcomed them with great cordiality. Only the garrison in the castle showed any sign of opposition, but even they were soon compelled to surrender. The executive government was placed in the hands of a Supreme Council, with a President at its head; a great seal was ordered to be made, and a new coinage was issued. But, as on some former occasions, the parties in Ireland were hopelessly divided, and though there was an effort to unite them under a Lord Lieutenant, it was soon apparent that such an arrangement would not be quietly submitted to. In 1645-6 an attempt was made to proclaim peace at Limerick, but it was received with violence, and such showers of stones were thrown on this occasion, that the anniversary was long after known as "Stony Thursday."

In August, 1649, Cromwell landed at Dublin. He was succeeded shortly after by his son-in-law, Ireton, who, early in April, 1651, marched on Limerick at the head of the Parliamentary forces. But the citizens were prepared for a prolonged and determined resistance. They put the fortifications in a thorough state of defence, and might have succeeded in wearying out, if not in repelling, the foe, as the only possible way of assailing the city was by landing a force at King's Island—a course which would have been attended with great danger. But the city was evidently divided against itself, and there were probably traitors within. Plague, too, added to the miseries of the besieged. And, after six months endurance, worn out by inward dissension and widespread privation and suffering, they agreed to surrender. For five years the city was placed under military rule, but in 1656 the municipal government was resumed; and at the Restoration the merchants who had been banished re-

turned, and were again invested with their ancient rights and liberties.

In the events that followed the Battle of the Boyne, Limerick assumed an important position, for the fate of a dynasty virtually depended on the attitude assumed by its citizens and garrison. King William found it necessary to invest the city with 20,000 men, but met with so determined an opposition that he had to retire again and again.

The animating spirit in these successive repulses was a young Colonel of the Dragoons, named Patrick Sarsfield, who, in 1688, had retired to France with James II., whose cause he most zealously espoused. At length, on October 1st, 1690, the celebrated Treaty of Limerick was signed—according to some, upon a stone near Thomond Bridge (of which we shall have more to say presently), which is still called "The Treaty Stone." But the treaty, which granted to the Roman Catholics all the privileges which they possessed in the reign of Charles II., was deliberately violated by the English House of Commons, though ratified by William and Mary. Efforts were ultimately made to retain the Irish soldiers in the service of the British Government; but though 3000, including the men of Ulster, either withdrew to their homes or joined the British Army, over 19,000 volunteered for foreign service, and embarked for France, where they formed the nucleus of the celebrated Irish Brigade. For more than sixty years after, the fortifications of Limerick were kept in good repair, but in 1760 their dismantling was commenced, and at the same time the city was extended, and began to show signs of renewed prosperity. Nothing serious has occurred since, politically, to hinder its advancement, though now and then its tranquillity has been disturbed by threatened insurrection.

One event happened in the reign of George II., which is worthy of record, though it had nothing to do with military or regal conflict. The year 1739 was signalised by "The Great Frost," which continued for forty days, and was accompanied and succeeded by unparalleled woes.

Lenihan, the local historian, tells us that persons died of sheer starvation in the public streets and that their bodies lay unburied. "When provisions were exhausted, the people had recourse to every means to sustain life, even to cats, dogs, mice, carrion, putrid meat, nettles, docking, etc. The highways and fields were covered with dead bodies, where they remained a prey to birds and beasts, infecting the whole air with the putrid exhalations. Four hundred thousand persons are computed to have perished of famine and sickness. When coffins could not be provided in sufficient quantities or with sufficient quickness, a bottomless coffin was provided, from which the corpse was thrown into the grave, and hundreds of the dead were interred in this way." It is a relief to turn from so revolting a story, to record that in the following year George Whitfield, the great Revivalist of the eighteenth century, arrived in Limerick from America, and preached to crowded audiences in the Cathedral of St. Mary.

PART II.

THE present city of Limerick consists of three portions, *viz.* :—the English Town, the Irish Town, and New-Town Pery. Of these, the first two are ancient, the third is modern.

The English Town is situated at the western extremity of what is known as "the King's Island," and was formerly the centre of the civil, military, and ecclesiastical organisations. Here the nobility and gentry resided; here were to be found the more important houses of trade and commerce; and here the castle, gaol, court-house, cathedral, and principal churches were located. The city was confined within narrow limits, but judging from old plans and maps, it presented a regular and handsome appearance, and was strongly fortified. The whole area, in fact, was surrounded by a wall which in

some places was 36 ft. thick, pierced with seventeen gates, and surmounted by several towers; and though in 1760 the fortifications were dismantled, sufficient stonework remains to enable us to define the extent of the enclosure. The streets, with the exception of St. Nicholas Street, were narrow and crooked, and could only be traversed by foot-passengers; but on either side there rose lofty and somewhat imposing structures, with quaint curved gables, many of which are now crumbling to decay. Here and there we meet only with vacant spaces and a few piled up stones, to mark the spots once occupied by the wealthy and the great; and where time and war have dealt more gently with the bricks and mortar, poor families may be found, even inhabiting the cellars, for which privilege they pay the trifling sum of 1s. a week. The writer looked down into several of these subterranean dwellings, some of which were utilised as workshops also, and saw in addition to half-clad, dirty, wretched-looking human beings, (of whom children formed no inconsiderable proportion), cats, dogs, poultry, and other live-stock, who seemed to share with them the close, foul-smelling apartments, which were doubtless dignified by the sacred name of "home."

The Irish Town was originally no more than a suburb of the English Town. It comprises the locality allotted to the native inhabitants in the reign of King John. It, too, was surrounded by walls, of which the eastern portion is still in a fair state of preservation. In some parts, these walls (which were commenced in the fourteenth century, and not extended till the early part of the seventeenth century) attained the height of 40 ft., and were backed by a rampart of earth about 20 ft. thick. The present aspect of this district is by no means inviting. "One wanders amid ruins, ancient and modern, without style, covered with dirt and vermin; squalid houses of faded red bricks built into pieces of old black walls, which, notwithstanding their great age, are in a less crumbling condition than the hovels they support, and at intervals one gets glimpses of the East in the side streets, with their low house-fronts roughly daubed over with fresh white-

wash." The dwellers here harmonise with their surroundings. Bare-headed and bare-footed women, whose locks could not often have been in contact with a comb, and whose garments, very much *décollété*, display a considerable surface of unwashed skin, chatter to each other in what to us appears almost an unknown tongue, so rapid is their utterance and so harsh their brogue ; and those whose olfactory nerves are sensitive will do well to withdraw to a more salubrious region, for the sanitary arrangements are by no means perfect. These two towns, as they are called, are connected by Ball's Bridge, of which we shall speak more fully hereafter.

New-Town Pery, which is now the chief business centre, dates from about seventy years after the last siege of Limerick. So recent indeed is its construction, that a gentleman living in 1851 remembered shooting snipe in Patrick Street. Meadows stretched down to the water's edge, and the shores of the Shannon must have formed a pleasant promenade. Now it would be as difficult for a stranger passing down the main thoroughfare, George Street, to realise that he was walking parallel with a wide-flowing river, as for one journeying down the Strand in London, for the houses on one side have turned their backs upon the water, and form, with a corresponding row on the other side of the way, one long street, straight and broad, from which numerous other streets branch out at right angles, crossed by others, with almost geometrical precision.

Among the oldest relics of the past, *the Cathedral of St. Mary* naturally occupies the most prominent place. It was founded, as we have intimated, by King Donald O'Brien, about the time of the Norman invasion, being built upon the site of one of his palaces ; and though several additions have been made to it since its first erection, enough of the original structure remains to excite our veneration and wonder. The entrance is somewhat peculiar in ecclesiastical architecture, being formed by a pillared arch under a lofty battlemented tower, in the middle of the west façade. This idea seems to have originated in the twelfth century. In almost all

Saxon and Early English churches the tower was placed at either the right or left side of the façade, an arrangement which disfigured the building, and sometimes induced the architect to erect another on the opposite side, and so secure uniformity. Some have suggested that this portion of the structure formed part of the original palace. The walls are 13 feet thick, and the tower which they support rises to the height of 120 feet, the upper portion being of more modern date than the rest, replacing that which was injured during the sieges of 1690 and 1691. The cathedral has no architectural beauty. The pillars which separate the nave from the aisles are merely square piles of masonry, chamfered and rounded off on the edges, the base and cap only being of cut stone. The thinnest are 36 feet square; those in the transept are of greater bulk. There are several stained-glass windows, but they present no striking features of interest. The pulpit is of carved stone. The choir stalls are plain, though substantial, and carved at the ends. A simple communion table, an old stone font, and a small organ, complete the ordinary ecclesiastical furniture. There are, however, a few monuments and tablets to the memory of local worthies which claim our attention, some of which date from A.D. 1414. In the north wall of the chancel may be seen a huge memorial of Donald O'Brien, which was much injured by Ireton's soldiers in the time of the Rebellion, but re-edified in 1678, as the inscription informs us. The effigies of O'Brien and his wife repose on slabs in one of the compartments, broken and defaced. The coffin-lid of the noble king is let into the floor of Bishop Jebb's Chapel, now used as a Sunday school, where there is also an excellent modern marble statue of Dr. Jebb himself, once Bishop of Limerick, seated in a chair. (This was the work of E. H. Bailey, R.A., 1836.) A large stone slab on the floor also marks the resting-place of Matilda Alexina Napier. Beside the wall of the chapel is fixed an old stone table, 13 feet long by 9 feet deep, which once did duty as an altar; and beneath it rests a large circular stone lid, part of the old baptismal font. A tablet let into the west wall has the following quaint

inscription, which we reproduce *verbatim et literatim*:

MEMENTO MORY

Here lieth little Samvell
Barrington the great under
taker of famious citties
Clock and chime maker
He made his own time goe
Both early and latter but now
He is returned to GOD his cre
ator

The 19th November then he
scest and for his memory
this here is pleast by his son Ben
1693

In the south transept is a white marble slab affixed to a pillar, inscribed thus: "Dan Hayes, an Honest man and a Lover of his country. He died in London 1767 and his remains were conveyed to Limerick."

In Lord Limerick's Chapel is a recumbent figure of his son Edmond Henry, Lord Glentworth, who died in 1846; and hanging over the doorway are a single ball and a pair of chained ones, which broke down a portion of the cathedral tower when the city was besieged. Part of the original roof of the cathedral still remains, exposed to view. It consists of old Irish oak from the woods of Cratloe, Co. Clare, and, although dating from 1100, is as sound as ever. Several tombs and vaults may be found in the graveyard. A small turfed space occupies the west end of the building, overlooking the river and bridge. Originally the cathedral was surrounded by groups of ecclesiastical buildings, connected by underground passages with the centre pile, but all these have been swept away, though here and there traces of them may yet be seen.

A curious legend pertains to the cathedral bells. They were cast in Italy. The founder was so much in love with his work, that he took lodgings under the walls of the convent that contained them, that he might enjoy their ringing. But one day they were stolen. Inconsolable at their loss, the artist wandered all over Europe for many years in search of them. In the course of his travels he came to Limerick. He had hardly landed

before a joyous peal echoed through the evening mist. His face at once lit up with smiles, for he recognised the voice of his much-loved daughters, and he stretched out his arms as if to embrace them. But the emotion was too much for him, and he fell on the ground and expired. His tomb is among the monuments with which the cathedral is paved.

Another story respecting the bells, which appear to have been made of silver, may be put on record. It is said that when the cathedral passed into the hands of the Protestants, the Catholics threw them into the Abbey River; and that when they (the Catholics) recover possession of the building, the bells will float to the surface. But whatever may have become of the original chimes, the tower is not destitute of music; and it is interesting to note that it sends forth from time to time sweet airs, such as "O Rest in the Lord," the bells being manipulated by one man, the humble blower of the organ.

A story of a different order is also told respecting the belfry of St. Mary. During the siege in 1690 a cannon was hoisted on the top of the tower, worked by the best gunners in the town, which made great havoc in the army of Orangemen. King William barely escaped being hit by one of the projectiles, and the besiegers found it necessary to direct their fire to the church till the gun was silenced.

The old episcopal palace was situated near St. Munchin's Church, but the site has been long since covered with small cottages. *St. Munchin's Church* (situate near the Castle) occupies the site of an ancient cathedral. The original edifice is attributed to St. Munchin (or Manchin), of whom mention has been made before.

The ecclesiastical buildings of ancient Limerick were numerous and imposing. The principal of these was a Dominican Friary, founded early in the thirteenth century, of which nothing now remains, except two lofty ivy-covered walls, and an interesting doorway in the grounds of the present Convent of Mercy. About the same time was established the Priory of St. Augustine, not a trace of which is to be seen. Some remains, however, of a

building belonging to the Order, which stood on the site of the old City Court House, may still be discerned, immediately opposite the principal entrance to the cathedral grounds. A Franciscan abbey of the same period stood just outside the city walls, of which a few traces yet exist, though they are becoming fewer every day. There was also a house of the Order of the Knights Templar.

King John's Castle, to which reference has already been made, was a formidable structure, and even now, after the lapse of nearly seven centuries, presents an imposing aspect. It was so constructed as to defy alike the ravages of time and the assaults of war. The river front, which measures about 200 feet in length, is flanked by two massive round towers, each 50 feet in diameter, with walls 10 feet in thickness, the more ancient of the two, near the bridge, bearing on its surface the marks of severe cannonading, the holes which had been made by balls being filled in with red bricks. The original entrance lies between two more round towers, lofty and almost invulnerable; but it is remarkably narrow, and has long since been closed. A fifth tower of similar construction was situated at the corner where the walls ran parallel to the river. A deep broad moat surrounded the whole, which was supplied with water from the Shannon. The picturesque effect of the structure is now greatly marred by the military barracks erected in 1751, which project beyond the massive outline, and are daubed over with a yellow wash.

Between Mary Street and the river there stand the ruins of an old fortified residence, called *Whittaker's Castle*, and sometimes the Castle of Limerick. It was substantially built of cut limestone, and appears to have been constructed to resist a siege. It is also known as Sarsfield's Castle, as it is popularly believed to have been occupied by that distinguished general during the last two sieges of Limerick. Some of the walls are still standing, to one of which an old chimney-piece may be seen clinging, unsupported by a floor. The exploration of these ruins by the writer appeared to excite the curiosity of the occupants of the adjacent houses, who

evidently could see nothing in a building that had fallen to decay, to awaken the interest of a stranger. The remains of another castle may be seen in Atlunkard Street, in one of whose walls a drinking-fountain has been placed.

At the corner of Nicholas Street, near the sight of the old Exchange, may be seen the most notable of all the ancient private dwelling-houses that have hitherto survived the wreck of time. It is said to have been occupied in 1600 by Sir Geoffrey Galway, Mayor of Limerick, and to have been the house in which Ireton died of the plague in 1651. Possibly it is part of the old palace of the Kings of Limerick, which is known to have stood on this very spot. Certainly, the ground-floor is of great antiquity. But if it were once the abode of luxury and grandeur, it is now put to much humbler uses, for it is let out into tenements, and gives signs of soon being numbered among the ruins of the past. One of the tenants, an old man, who said that he had lived there fifty years, invited the writer to look over the building. Its rickety appearance, however, combined with filth and malodorous perfumes, did not encourage a close and prolonged inspection.

In the middle of Mary Street may be also seen the ruins of the old gaol.

The present St. John's Hospital (situate in the Irish Town) may also be mentioned here, as it preserves some most interesting remains of the old fortifications. The walls are of great thickness; and at the western wing of the hospital was once the guard-house of the citadel.

Reference has already been made to *Thomond Bridge*, which was erected in the time of King John, and which connected the English Town with the Clare side of the river. Originally it was very narrow, and had no flag-way for foot passengers. Small chambers or recesses were provided over each of the piers, into which people could withdraw when two vehicles were passing each other. In 1821 it was widened, but less than twenty years after a new bridge was built upon the same site, but without the drawbridge which formerly existed at the city end. The old guard-house has been long ago

demolished, and a row of ancient houses opposite the castle has also been removed. Immediately above the bridge there stretches a ledge of rocks from one side of the river to the other, which can be traversed at low tide with perfect safety.

Ball's Bridge, which has also been mentioned as connecting the English and Irish towns, is worthy of special reference, though there is no bridge of whose origin so little is known. Even its name is uncertain. In Irish it was called "the Bald Bridge of Limerick," *bald* signifying without parapets or battlements, which no doubt correctly described it. It was sometimes written *Baal's Bridge*, after a heathen prince whom St. Patrick converted to Christianity, and by whom it is said to have been built. The original bridge was particularly quaint. It had four arches, and has been spoken of as a sort of Old London Bridge in miniature, with old-fashioned houses on either side, and a very narrow passage between them—so narrow, in fact, that two cars could not pass at the same time. It was widened in 1757, but sustained severe damage in 1775, in consequence of which several houses fell. The remainder, occupying one side of the bridge, continued to stand until 1830, when a new structure was erected, consisting of one arch with a span of 70 feet, at a cost of £600.

A third bridge of note, subsequently called *Mathew's Bridge* (after Father Mathew, the apostle of temperance),* was commenced in 1761, but replaced by a new one in 1844. In the centre of the old structure two iron lamp-posts were set opposite each other, and made fast to the parapets. It was discovered by the authorities that their construction made them suitable to be used as a gallows, and accordingly in the Rebellion of 1798, several criminals were hung thereon.

Park Bridge was built about 1798. It crosses the Abbey River, a short distance above the Abbey Slip, and leads to the suburban district of Corbally.

* Father Mathew arrived in Limerick, December 3, 1839. His discourses on temperance caused great excitement, and it is stated that at least 10,000 people knelt down in Mallow Street alone, and received the pledge in one day.

The Atlunkard Bridge is a fine wide structure of more recent date, consisting of five arches. This was built (1826 to 1830) at a cost of £7000, and opened up communication with Clare and Galway.

The *Wellesley Bridge* is a splendid structure, occupying an important position near the middle of the harbour. It took eleven years to build. It consists of five river arches, with a swivel bridge, and two quay arches. It was formally opened in 1835, and cost £89,061. Since 1883 its name has been changed to Sarsfield Bridge.

We have already spoken, at the commencement of this article, of the *River Shannon*, on which the city is built. It rolls in a magnificent and broad stream through the heart of the town. "The quayage and wharfage extend about 1,600 yards. The harbour has a patent slip for vessels of 500 tons, three ship-building slips, a floating dock where vessels of 1000 tons can discharge, and a graving dock." The river is undoubtedly the best salmon river in the island. In 1757, a *canal* was cut at Bartlett's bog. In the following year it was opened up to the Shannon at Rebogue, and subsequently was continued up to Killaloe.

The Treaty Stone, as it is called, situate at the foot of the Thomond Bridge, on the Clare side, usually attracts the attention of the visitor, being, as we have already observed, the place where the treaty of 1691 is supposed to have been signed, in the presence of the English and Irish troops. The stone makes no pretension to style or beauty. As it now appears, it is a rather unsightly, ill-shaped block; but in 1865 it was mounted on a granite pedestal, bearing on one side the words, "The Treaty of Limerick, signed A.D. 1691"; on the second and fourth sides the quotation, "Urbs antiqua fuit studiisque asperimma belli"; and on the third side the inscription, "This pedestal was erected May, 1865. John Rickard Tinsley, Mayor." Popular traditions die hard, and Mr. Tinsley and his followers might be somewhat disappointed if it could be proved to them that this stone served a far more humble purpose than that which is attributed to it. For Lenihan states that the treaty is said to have been signed

at or near the Red Gate, within a mile of the city on the Clare side, but not on the so-called Treaty Stone, which was originally used by country people for getting on horseback when leaving town. He quotes also a paragraph from the *Cork Freeholder* of Monday, 11th July, 1814, to the following effect: "The late Miss Dobbin, of Brown Street, had in her possession *a table on which the Treaty of Limerick was signed*, and which was about being auctioned off on the decease of the above lady." But the inscription on the pedestal has now been proclaiming the popular belief for over thirty years, and future generations will no doubt accept the statement as positive proof.

PART III.

LIMERICK contains a few monuments of somewhat modern date, which are worthy of a passing remark. On Wellesley Bridge there was erected in 1855 a bronze, life-like statue of Lord Fitzgibbon, who fell that year in the Crimean War. At the side of the Roman Catholic Cathedral there stands another large bronze statue, "To commemorate the indomitable energy and stainless honour of General Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan, the heroic defender of Limerick during the sieges of 1690 and 1691. Died from the effects of wounds received at the Battle of Landen, 1693." This monument, which represents Sarsfield as cheering on his soldiers in the conflict, stands upon a plain stone pedestal, and was erected in 1881. In the centre of the Crescent there was placed in 1857 a statue of O'Connell, the Irish Liberator, which cost £1000; and in Baker Place, on the way to the Railway Station, may be seen a large clock, on a lofty ornamental stone pedestal, erected in 1867, to commemorate the public enterprise of Sir Peter Tait. From the centre of the Park or Pleasure Grounds there rises a tall column surmounted by the effigy of the Right Honourable Thomas Spring Rice (M.P. 1820 to 1833, and Chan-

cellor of the Exchequer, 1835 to 1839). This appears to be the oldest monument in the city, having been erected about 1830. Following the embankment of the Shannon on the south side of the city, the tourist finds a castellated tower with this inscription: "Erected by his fellow-citizens as a memorial of the probity and energy which have distinguished the career of the Right Worshipful Wm. Spillon, J.P., Mayor of Limerick, 1870; High Sheriff, 1872. This embankment was opened on the 14th day of October, 1870, during his Mayoralty." Above the inscription is his coat of arms, and beneath it are the arms of the City of Limerick. Outside the cemetery in Mulgrave Street, on the road to Cork, there stands a lofty monument of white granite, consisting of a cross, at the foot of which is a weeping female figure, with an Irish harp, and at her side a sharp-looking watch-dog. It is of quite recent date, and bears the following inscription: "This memorial was erected by the Nationalists of the City and County of Limerick, in memory of the martyrs, Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien, who were executed at Manchester, November 23rd. 1867. God save Ireland."

In the beginning of the present century there existed "Roche's Hanging Gardens," a series of elevated terraces, occupying over an acre of ground, from the highest of which an extensive prospect of the city and surrounding country was obtained. They were constructed by a banker named Roche for his own delectation, at a cost of £15,000, but have now disappeared.

The most prominent among the modern churches, and certainly one of the chief ornaments of the city, is *St. John's Cathedral*, whose light graceful spire rises to the height of 280 feet. The foundation stone was laid in 1856, but the spire was not completed till 1883. It replaces an old building, which dated from 1753, in which, for over 100 years, the Roman Catholic Bishops of the diocese were accustomed to minister. The High Altar, which is exceptionally fine, is the work of a Belgian artist, and the beautiful white marble statue of the Blessed Virgin was executed by Belzoni.

The Church of the Redemptorist Fathers, or, as it is

sometimes called (after their founder), the Church of St. Alphonsus de Liguori, occupies a prominent position at the southern end of the city. Its style is early Gothic, and it slightly exceeds in length the Cathedral of St. John. The Reredos and High Altar are impressive features of the interior, which, together with the massive tower, were the gift of a liberal citizen, Mr. John Quin. The Church was dedicated in 1862.

Space would fail us to enumerate, still less to describe, the numerous religious edifices with which Limerick abounds. It must suffice us to say that all sections of the Church are represented in the city, as the following list will show. It contains ten Roman Catholic Chapels (including the Roman Catholic Cathedral and several convent chapels), five Irish Episcopal Churches, two Methodist Chapels, one Congregational Church, one Meeting-house for the Brethren, one Quakers' Meeting-house, and one Presbyterian Church. Some of the Roman Catholic Churches have no frontage to the road, but are approached through what appears to be the door of a dwelling-house. One, in fact, the Church of the Augustinian Fathers, in George Street, was originally a theatre.

Out of a population of 38,000, about 5000 only are Protestants; the remainder belong to the Roman Catholic Church.

Education is carefully looked after in Limerick. There are from fifteen to twenty schools, under the supervision of the Christian Brethren. About 9000 boys are under regular instruction in these schools. The same number of girls are taught by the nuns in the various convent schools. There is a good National School, besides private establishments. In Hartstonge Street there are situated the Leany Free Schools, now exclusively Protestant. They originated in 1841, and are maintained out of funds to the amount of £13,300, bequeathed by Wm. Leany, Esq., "for the education of the children of the poor in Ireland, especially those in the neighbourhood of the city of Limerick." It is not surprising, therefore, that so many among the poorer classes should be

well-spoken and well-informed. The writer was told also that the morals of the rising generation are anxiously watched over by their religious instructors. It may be added that it is a pity that the Irish language is not more extensively cultivated, as it is said to be a language in which it is impossible to use a coarse or obscene word. Would that as much could be said for our own mother tongue!

Limerick has been famous for many special industries, some of which, unhappily, have now vanished. More than a century ago Limerick gloves had world-wide reputation. They owed their superiority to a secret of which a glover named Lyons and his family were the sole possessors. This manufacturer frequently received orders from the Russian and other European courts. So fine was the texture of the gloves that they were sold, enclosed in walnut shells; their cost was 6d. a pair, and some were dyed "cloth colour," whatever that may mean. They are hardly even remembered now.

The once celebrated fishing-hooks, each of which was said to be worth a salmon, are also things of the past. Inferior articles are still to be obtained, but the original ones cannot be equalled for form, lightness, and temper.

Brewing has been carried on for many generations; but one special kind, *viz.*:—the brewing of heather, the secret of making which was possessed by the Danes, has long since ceased. "Dane's Ale" is still remembered as a tradition, but it is nothing more.

Paper-making has disappeared, and wool-combing also. But sufficient industries still remain to give occupation to large numbers of the community.

Limerick lace has been described as equal, if not superior to Brussels or Valenciennes. Introduced in 1829 on a humble scale, the trade developed so rapidly that in 1841 no less than 1,700 females were employed. Subsequently it declined, but it is being revived under the auspices of the sisters of the Good Shepherd Convent, and by a private lady who has established a lace factory in the city, whose pupils have already produced some very excellent work. An extensive trade has for many

years been done in corn and flour, the mills of Messrs. J. N. Russell & Co. and Messrs. J. Bannatyne & Sons, having attained a wide reputation.

The army clothing factory, founded by Sir Peter Tait, employs at the present time seven hundred hands, mostly girls and women. The writer was privileged to go over the establishment, and will endeavour in a few words to tell what he saw and heard. After the pattern of the various parts of the garments is made in paper, it is placed over thirty pieces of cloth piled one upon the other, and a circular knife cuts through the whole. When the pieces are sewn, the garments and seams are pressed by means of irons, the interiors of which are fitted with gas jets. There is also a machine, heated by gas, for stretching trousers and shaping them so that they curve well over the instep of the boot. One man does nothing but punch button-holes for coats, in which occupation he can dispatch 1,500 to 1,800 coats a day. So diligent are the workers, and so speedy are the means employed, that not unfrequently 1000 garments *per diem* are sent to Pimlico. Soldiers' helmets are also made here in large quantities. The process of manufacture appears very simple to an onlooker. The lining is stretched upon a block. Layers of cork are then fixed on with a solution of india-rubber and naphtha, the whole is filed smooth, and a cloth covering is added, and lo! the thing is done! A branch has been opened for ready-made clothes, the prices of which are remarkably low.

Limerick bacon is known and appreciated everywhere. Three firms alone in the city are responsible for the slaughter of about 10,000 pigs per week. The writer visited one of the largest of these factories, and was courteously initiated in the most approved method of pig-sticking, and the preparation of the meat for the market. From first to last the pig passes through twelve sets of hands, and yet the work of killing, scalding, singeing, scraping, stamping, marking, cleaving, arranging for salting, &c., only occupies a few minutes, the carcasses being strung up in a row stretching the whole length of one building, one animal being no sooner passed

on to undergo the next process than another is ready. Women are employed as well as men, chiefly in the washing of the entrails, the making of brawn and sausages, and the painting and labelling of the tins in which the latter are hermetically sealed.

The condensed milk factory occupies a large area on the Clare side of the river, and though the industry has been only established in recent years, it has already secured a good name. It appropriates the milk of ten thousand cows, and gives employment to four hundred persons.

All smokers are no doubt familiar with Limerick Twist. This has for a long time held its own against foreign competition, and is now in no danger of losing its position.

There are no "gin palaces" in Limerick, but most of the grocers and tea-dealers have refreshment bars for the sale of beer and spirits, one portion of the shop being divided up into small compartments, fitted with benches and tables, into which the thirsty traveller,—or more often the habitual toper—can retire, comparatively secure from observation or intrusion. In fact, there are only about six grocers in the city who do not favour the drink traffic; these are all Nonconformists, and chiefly members of the Society of Friends.

Our space forbids a more extended reference to the various ecclesiastical, military, scholastic, municipal, and commercial buildings which have arisen during the present century. We must content ourselves with observing that in the newer portions of the city the streets are wide and regular, and that the public edifices will compare favourably with those in any other part of the country.

Next to the beer-sellers, shoe-makers seem to predominate, a curious fact in a country where three-fourths of the people go barefoot, and where the poor who possess boots generally carry them on their arms along the country roads, only putting them on when they arrive in town. There are no signs of great activity or eagerness to thrive. Few carriages hurry to and fro

(though Jehu loves to drive furiously when he secures a railway passenger) and pedestrians seem to traverse the thoroughfares as if they had plenty of leisure. Idlers of both sexes abound, ill-clad and dirty, the men smoking—and sometimes the women too—giving the city the sorry appearance of material and moral stagnation. And yet a good trade is certainly done in some quarters, and it would doubtless be vastly improved if more vessels navigated “the lazy waters of the Shannon.”

The environs though flat, are not devoid of beauty. There is little wood, but the soil is rich and fertile. Handsome villas are rising in the suburbs, and the Clare and Tipperary mountains in the distance give a certain dignity to the scene. Thick stone walls line the country roads, and hedges are “conspicuous by their absence”; but there are many places within an easy walking distance that will well repay a visit, both on account of their individual charms, and their historical and antiquarian interest.

There are no night policemen ; but during the reign of darkness watchmen with capes and long poles patrol the streets of the city; and those who, like the writer, are troubled with *insomnia*, may hear them call out the hour of the night and the state of weather, in tones that sound strangely in the still, clear air.

F. J. AUSTIN.

The Affair of the "Blue Coats."

It was in the time of the Terror. How well do I remember those fearsome days, when the tumbrils rattled nightly to the Luxembourg, and the prisons were full, and the guillotine was ever red with blood! It was the reign of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, when the *citoyens* sat at their little tables in the Rue Saint Honoré in the evenings, and all should have been merry; for the tyrants were slain, and France was free. And yet death was everywhere. Batches of men and women—one hundred and fifty at once—are dragged off daily from noisome dungeons, the vile houses of arrest, to the place of execution, where the sharp knife of the little Barber who shaves so well, soon ends their woes. Men's faces are calm, but their hearts are filled with fear. *Moutons* are everywhere, detestable traitor jackals, who spy and bear false witness; the *garçon* who serves you with a *petit verre* may be an agent of the Republic, whose report may send you to the Conciergerie to-night, and to the guillotine to-morrow. The fatal roll-call is read out daily. Men rush to hear if their names are included in the list of victims. If not, they breathe more freely; at least they have another day to live.

In this strange drama, I, Etienne Renault, played my part, and hitherto had acted well. I once had my dream of the charms of Liberty and Brotherhood, of the glories of France freed from the grip of the despots; but all that was past long ago. What was the use of dethroning tyrants, if one raised up an accursed breed of foul-souled, base-born despots, who were thrice as tyrannical, and a hundred times more cruel than they who wore crowns! It was all folly; and France was mad; her rulers were

mad, and it was the part of wise men to humour them, and save their own necks. So I played my cards well. I was a friend of Robespierre, Barrère, Henriot, Carnot and the rest. I gained wealth and and honour; sat in the Assembly, and lived at my ease. What mattered it to us who rode in our carriages, how many vile *canaille* rode in the tumbrils! France was reckless, we were all reckless; we enjoyed our pleasures which were none of the simplest. *Carpe diem*, our motto; to-morrow, the deluge.

So I lived, as gay a spark as ever haunted the Palais Royal, or Palais Egalité, as we called it then. And moreover, I was happy—I was in love. How shall I describe the beautiful Marie as she appeared when I first beheld her! Her sire, Monsieur Sombreuil, was of noble birth. He was also a suspect, and was about to be conveyed to the Conciergerie; but through my influence in high places, his life was saved, and Marie made happy. I used frequently to go to her house in the Rue de Saint Denis and play chess with her father, so that I might watch Marie's blushing face bent over her needlework, and ever and anon sun myself in her smiles. We were not long in discovering our mutual love, and life had a new joy for me.

But there were thorns among the roses. I had a rival, and that a powerful one. Monsieur Gobel, who was one of Robespierre's Lieutenants, a shrewd and unscrupulous wretch, had seen Marie, and was attracted by her. I suspected that he had created the suspicions against her sire, in order that he might profit by his absence, and gain possession of the defenceless girl. Such cases were not uncommon at that time. However, his plans were foiled by my endeavours, and I was aware that he bore me no good will. But what cared I? I was as strong as he, and I vowed that Marie should be mine in spite of a thousand Gobels.

So affairs stood on the memorable night of June 15th, 1793. On that evening, Barrère gave one of his choice dinners to a company of gay bachelors in his splendid house in the Rue Saint Honoré. In order to distinguish ourselves from the common herd, we had formed a select

society styled "The Blue Coats," so named from the brilliant dress-coats which we wore when we dined together. It was Barrère's turn to entertain the Society of Blue Coats. The tumbril rattled down the street with a goodly batch of victims; but what was that to us? The death shrieks of a few women would not disturb our merriment.

Barrère received the company in his fine salon, furnished with the spoils of an old royalist mansion, the owner of which had felt the touch of the knife of old Sampson, the executioner, and had no further use for nick-nacks and fine furniture. As I entered the room I saw besides our host, Billaud, Carnot, Vadier, and other notables of the Republic.

"Messieurs," said Barrère, "right glad am I to welcome you. The fraternity of the Blue Coats has already made its mark upon the society of Paris, and to-night we will revel to our hearts' content. Austerity, Frugality, and Asceticism are the watchwords of our order. We will see to-night how carefully we can carry out our precepts."

Barrère was always a little verbose before dinner; afterwards his periods were less rounded. At that moment my rival entered the *salon*, strutting like a peacock.

"Ah! here comes Brother Gobel, weary with the toils of government. How many wretches have you sent to the hair-cutter to-day, *mon ami*?" asked Barrère.

"A beggarly thirty-five!" he replied. "We shall certainly have to proceed more strenuously. The prisons are all full, and we shall be obliged to make a clearance of the worst offenders. The odour is positively dangerous." He applied to his nose a heavily scented kerchief, as if to dispel by its perfumes the recollection of the dungeon's stench.

"That is easy enough," said Carnot. "The committee can easily find an excuse, and a plot in the Conciergerie can always be discovered for the purpose of filling the tumbrils."

"Ah! Monsieur Renault," said Gobel, as he bowed to me with the utmost politeness, "we have not seen you

lately at our councils. Monsieur has doubtless been more agreeably occupied."

I bowed, and pleaded that the heat had recently been so oppressive, that I had avoided the crowded chamber. Gobel smiled sarcastically, and evidently knew that I preferred the company of Marie to that of councillors of the Assembly.

"It is infernally hot," said Barrère, "let us doff our coats and dine in our shirt sleeves. Thus we will set a new fashion, and who knows how soon the inferior members of society will follow our example?"

We heartily agreed to the proposal of our host, and soon our resplendent blue coats were deposited upon the chairs and couches of the *salon*, and we proceeded to follow Barrère to the banqueting-room.

There we feasted right heartily, and did full justice to Barrère's hospitality. The merry wine-cup flowed; toasts and healths were drunk freely, and everyone was laughing and jesting. My neighbour's sportiveness was rather gruesome, as he would insist on jesting on the blonde perukes, made from the hair of slain duchesses, or on Mendon tannery, which produced wonderful breeches fashioned from the skins of the guillotined.

"Let us change the subject of our talk, *mon ami*," I at length ventured to say. "This scarcely gives one an appetite for Barrère's excellent viands."

"It always increases mine," he replied, "as I feel what a pleasure it is to live."

I tried in vain to throw off a feeling of melancholy which possessed me, and which did not escape the notice and the jests of the company. In spite of the heat I felt cold, and begged leave from our host to put on my coat. They all declared that I had the fever, that the prisons were a source of danger to the health of the community, and must be at once cleared and cleansed.

So I retired to the *salon* to put on my blue coat. I had placed it at the corner of a couch, where I found one which appeared to be mine. It was new, and cut after the latest fashion, the blue cloth being adorned with resplendent gold braid. I put it on, and happening to place

my hand in a pocket, found a paper, the existence of which I did not recollect. I wondered what the missive could be—a forgotten *billet-doux*—a letter from an indignant *citoyen* demanding payment for some trumpery bill? I opened it. Mine eyes began to swim, and I could scarcely read the writing. It was the fatal list of those who were to be arrested on the following day, and there—the third name on the list—was my own!

Oh! this was horrible. Who could have done this deed? Was I, too, to be slain, to go in that accursed cart? Already I felt the sharp cut of the knife on my neck, and nearly fainted. Yes, and there, too, I saw the name of Monsieur Sombreuil, the father of my beloved. Ah! I see it all now. This is the work of that arch-traitor, Gobel. This coat is his, and by this strange chance I have become acquainted with his plot. He would rid the world of her lover and her sire, and then force Marie to accept him. Was there ever so great a villain?

But what could I do? Should I fly at once? Gobel would but send the guard after me, and my fate would be sealed. Was ever a danger so terrible? Was ever an escape so hopeless?

At last an idea began to form itself in my distracted mind. I began to collect my scattered faculties. I hastily doffed the coat of the villain, and found my own. I tried to calm myself, and essayed to go into the adjoining room, as though nothing had happened.

The feasting had ended, and the revellers were arranging themselves for card-playing. High stakes characterised the play of the Blue Coats, and long night sittings were often protracted till the pure rays of the dawn shamed the pale and anxious faces of the gamesters. I strolled in the direction of Gobel, and challenged him to a game at picquet. Everyone was talking and laughing, and scarcely noticed us as we sat down to play.

We played at first with varied fortune; mine adversary continued to regard me with a cynical, self-satisfied air, and ever and anon smiled with glee.

"You have the luck to-night, Monsieur Renault," he

said presently, as he handed me a hundred francs. "Shall we play a little higher?"

"Certainly," I replied; so the stakes were doubled, and my luck deserted me. Gobel won five hundred francs.

"Shall we double again?" he suggested.

"By all means, Monsieur."

Gobel played a king; and then I started from my seat, threw down my cards, and exclaimed in wild passion:

"You cheated, Monsieur; you are a swindler."

Wild excitement was roused among the Blue Coats, who all rushed towards us.

"Messieurs, I have discovered why our friend Gobel contrives to be so successful in his play. No wonder his luck is usually so good, when he can conjure so cleverly. I denounce him as a swindler."

"Liar!" shouted Gobel, with rage, as he sprang from his seat and struck my face. "We shall soon discover the swindler."

"Yes, we shall soon see," I replied, as I threw a glass of wine in his face. "We will settle this matter instantly. I demand satisfaction."

"I will wait until to-morrow for my revenge," replied Gobel, who was a poor swordsman, and preferred more secret methods of slaying his adversaries.

"No, to-night—this very instant—in this room you shall answer to me for your insult."

The Blue Coats tried to persuade me to fix to-morrow for our meeting, but I was obdurate. If I waited till the morning I should be safe in prison, and Gobel would laugh at my threats.

Rapiers were produced. Gobel desired to retreat from the room, but I placed my back against the door, and vowed that he should not leave for one instant. He would have returned with guards and soldiers for my arrest.

So the fight began. Gobel was mad with rage, and assaulted me with blind fury. I parried his wild thrusts, and smiled at his unskilful but vigorous attack. This goaded him to fury. Savagely he thrust as he stamped

the ground, and strove in vain to break through my guard. I led him on, and marked with complaisance his hard breathing and the deadly palor of his face, when he found that all his efforts were useless. A furious thrust I turned, but his rapier grazed my cheek and drew blood. He attacked again more vigorously than ever ; but I saw that it was time for me to begin. Another wild thrust left his breast unguarded. With one turn of the wrist I recovered from the parry, and thrust the point of my rapier home above his heart. He fell. The Blue Coats rushed to raise him ; but I knew that he could not live. He was all but speechless, but contrived to gasp out :

"The list ! the list ! It is——"

"It is quite safe, Monsieur," I whispered.

He regarded me with a last savage look of hate, and fell back dead.

That night in the solitude of my chamber I burned that list which had been so fatal to its author, and had well-nigh proved fatal to me and to those dear to me. When I discovered how nearly I had reached my doom, I felt that France was no safe place for me, and resolved to fly. At early dawn I was on my way to Amiens, where Marie and her father joined me. Three days later we were in England, where Marie and I were married. That is many years ago, but I am not likely to forget that last night spent in the select company of the Blue Coats, and the hard fate which I so narrowly escaped.

P. H. DITCHFIELD, M.A., F.S.A.

The Taking of Ballynagle Tower.

WE were sitting in the stone-flagged hall, the Captain, the Junior Agent, and the Master, still wearing their pink coats, for they had just come in from a good run over the cream of the country round, and had not waited to even take off their mud-flecked "tops" before joining Betty and the English Visitor, who, aided by the Friend, were dispensing tea before the roaring turf fire.

The hall at Killman Castle is as comfortable a place as you could get to on a cold February afternoon. The huge open fire and the many deeply-cushioned armchairs were very alluring.

At least, so the Friend thought. He had come out ostensibly to shoot rabbits; really, the Master declared, "to sample the New Petticoat," for in such irreverent language did the O'Connoll allude to his charming guest, the English Visitor.

Anyhow, the Friend's double-barrelled, hammerless gun was still reposing in its case at the bottom of his red-wheeled dog-cart, and the Friend himself had spent the hours since lunch in playing battledore and shuttlecock with the English Visitor, and occasionally taking his turn at stirring the toffee, in the manufacture of which Madame O'Connoll—more commonly known as "Betty"—had burnt one half of her physiognomy a brilliant scarlet.

The hungry hunters had drunk much whiskey, and eaten much cold beef; now they were making equal quantities of tea and hot cakes disappear—those toothsome cakes of the county, "potato cakes" and "soda bread," which can only be eaten in all their native beauty in Ireland.

The dogs, alert for any scraps of food that might fall to

their share, sat with their backs to the flame, Phyllis, the overfed pug, making herself conspicuous by her fantastic methods of begging, and trying to impress Captain Adair and the English Visitor with the idea that she was dying of inanition.

"It might have been a very dangerous job, only I had such luck," said the Friend.

He pulled the Siamese cat's tail as he spoke, whereat she squalled, and retaliated by scratching the pug viciously, who fled for safety beneath her mistress's chair.

"Tell us all about it," Betty ordered imperiously, settling herself comfortably in the depths of her great armchair, and taking her injured pet up on her knees.

"Oh! please do," chimed in the English Visitor, fixing two brilliant, pleading eyes on the Friend's face, and stretching out two tiny little feet encased in golden embroidered bronze shoes towards the fire.

The Master ran for a footstool, Captain Adair flew to relieve the little lady of her empty tea-cup, the Junior Agent begged her in heart-broken tones to have the cushion out of his chair to add to the pile already behind her head.

The English Visitor beamed in turn upon them all, begged everyone "not to trouble about her, as she was very comfortable"; got up for a moment with a *frou-frou* of silken under garments, re-arranged her skirt so that a pink lace-trimmed petticoat of the most ravishing description became visible on one side; then, subsiding amongst her pillows again, transfixed the Friend's admiring eyes, and murmured—

"Do tell us the story."

"If Madame O'Connoll will let me light a cigar first? I could not spin the yarn without."

The Junior Agent, wishing to show that he moved in the Highest Circles, and knew their little ways, ventured to offer the English Visitor a cigarette; but the unfortunate young man soon regretted his temerity, for a look of the most reproachful horror was his only reward.

"Thank you, I *never* smoke." The English Visitor's

voice was very faint, and with a distinct note of injured innocence.

Captain Adair absolutely scowled at the Junior Agent, and the Master audibly called him a "confounded ass," but Betty, who had seen the silver box, with its couple of hundred "Egyptians" that adorned the English Visitor's dressing table, only laughed, and, to create a diversion, again called on the Friend for his story.

"There is not very much to tell; however, you shall hear it all," and settling himself in his corner, the Friend began.

My father had an estate in the North-West of Ireland of about 900 acres, a nice, compact little property divided into some dozen farms, varying in size from 20 to 200 acres.

On the largest of these farms stands the old Tower of Ballynagle, built, tradition says, by King John, and standing now a great, square ivy-grown block, as strong as when the English knights in their brilliant armour rode out to fight the savage Irish hordes from the mountains. Indeed, so well is the Tower preserved that succeeding generations of farmers have inhabited it, and will continue to do so, long after our bones are dust.

The walls vary from seven to ten feet in thickness, and on one side contain a little narrow staircase, built in their centre, which winds from base to summit of the tower, and I expect was the only one belonging to the place in olden times. Later on a new, broader staircase was added, and the square tower divided into three storeys, as the ancient divisions had all fallen in.

My father had had to re-floor the whole place, and had made on each landing, two rooms, with light lathe and plaster divisions. He had also put in modern windows, and had turned the old tower into a really comfortable farmhouse with six rooms, an underground kitchen or dairy, and a big staircase leading up from the main doorway, beside the little one built in the walls.

About twenty years ago he let in some tenants called Dempsey, decent folk enough they seemed, and for many years all went well.

Old Dempsey paid his rent without demur, and looked after his farm and made money out of it. Rumours of his being rather a wild card reached us, we heard that whiskey flowed freely morning, noon, and night in Ballynagle Tower, and that a set of hard riding, deep drinking squireens were Demsey's sworn companions.

Also it was said that only one of his five children was in possession of her wits, the other four—three girls and a boy—being "saft," as the country folk call it—or more properly speaking, mad. Indeed, one of the girls was bad enough to be confined for some time in the County Asylum; but the boy being more less harmless, was left to roam about the place at his own sweet will.

However, fate ordained that our dealings with the Dempseys were not to be all plain sailing, for one Christmas the old man died raving, in an attack of D.T.

Scandal said that he was smothered between feather beds, an old trick with the peasantry, and a favourite one for disposing of dangerous lunatics and delirious patients, but be that as it may, he died, and left his wife his tenant's interest in the farm, as his son, though now grown up, was practically an idiot—

"What," asked the English Visitor curiously, "is the tenant's interest in a farm?"

"The tenant's interest," explained the Junior Agent, "is a substantial value taken from the landlord without compensation and given to the tenant by the Government. It is nearly equivalent to a copyhold, for as long as the farmer pays his service—that is, his rent—he has a lease for ever of his holding, and can never be ejected. In point of fact, too, he often runs a good bit into arrears, and if in a bad season he thinks his rent too high, he can go into the Land Courts, and have the matter judicially settled, and his farm revalued. But the subject of the Land Commission is indeed a painful one, so I will say no more."

"Pray don't," said O'Connell with a groan of deep feeling. "Let us forget the Devil and all his works for a little."

"Mrs. Dempsey," continued the Friend, "on assuming

the reigns of government, seemed inclined to outdo her departed husband in her extravagances."

She sent for her mad daughter from the asylum, and such orgies went on in the old Tower, that the whole neighbourhood rang with it.

Naturally, under such management, the farm paid badly, and equally naturally, the landlord was the first to suffer.

Rent day after rent day came, and no rent was forthcoming, only a longer and longer string of specious excuses. She would pay when she sold her cattle, or her sheep, or the young horses. Always a ready excuse.

I was away with my regiment in India at the time, and my father let her run on, until at last, when the regiment came home, and I got leave, she owed us more than we could afford to lose. Then you know, I left the service, and began to manage for my father.

I was horrified to find matter, had reached such a pitch, and more so by his determination to still "be easy" on the woman. All I could induce him to do was to send me to her with an offer of £300 into her fist if she would go out peaceably.

"Do you mean to say your father offered her £300 to go away, when she owed you a lot of rent?" questioned the English Visitor, much astonished.

"Oh, that's nothing," said the Master. "Remember this is Ireland! The more your tenant owes you, in this country, the more you have to pay him to be so kind as to go off quietly, and not bring all the hornets of boycotting and of ten different leagues about you ears."

"But can't the Government? Haven't they stopped boycotting? Don't they protect you?"

A mirthless laugh interrupted her.

"My poor girl!" replied the Master gravely, "do not display your ignorance of what every school child knows here. What have Governments, Conservative or Liberal, ever done for the landlords? Each Parliament simply legislates for the tenants, until by hook or by crook, *they* pay hardly any rent, and *we* pay most of the taxes. By and bye when the present Government,

which I believe calls itself Conservative, have made it impossible for us to live here at all, they may—mind I only say may—open a better class of workhouse for us!”

“A home for lost and starving landlords, with a lethal chamber to dispose of the old and ugly ones,” suggests the English Visitor, irreverently, but her ill-timed levity met with severe looks, and to cover her confusion, the Friend went on.

Acting on these orders, I went down and interviewed Mrs. Dempsey, and a very wild object she was—perfectly unreasonable!

She informed me that she intended to pay no more rent at all, Home Rule was surely coming very soon, and the land would then be hers for nothing. She rejected with contempt my father's offer, and plainly told me that no power on earth, or emissary from a warmer place—which she politely dubbed me—should move her!

“Well, Mrs. Dempsey,” said I, “you must take the consequences of such folly. If you refuse my father's offer, I shall have you evicted, and you may whistle for your £300.”

“An' if ye show your waxed moustache here agin,” she retorted, “on such an errand, the ground shall drink up your English blood!”

Then turning to the Tower she shrieked out to her son.

“Mick, Mick, come here and look at the trather that would be after trying to put us from under the roof that has sheltered you and your father before you—God rist his soul! Mark him well, Aschula; an' if he ever pokes his nose here agin, show him that the blud of the old Oirish kings does not cease to flow in your veins.”

“Arrah now, and will I get a gun and shute him, mother?” asked the vacant-looking, over-grown boy, who answered to her call, regarding me with a wicked smile.

“Not this day, my son,” answered she; “but like a cur if he ever comes agin! You hear!” she shouted at me, and leading her son into the tower, she banged the door in my face.

When I told my father of my doings, he was sincerely sorry that his misplaced kindness had let matters get so bad.

"The place will be yours, Lovett, when I'm gone," he said, "so do now what you please."

Acting on this permission, I at once employed a solicitor in the nearest county town to Ballynagle, and prepared to eject Mrs. Dempsey and her brood from the farm.

The necessary legal forms were gone through, and, backed by all the forces of the Leaguers, she fought us step for step, using every legal quibble to defeat us, but of course uselessly, and at last it only remained for us to affect the ejectment.

But how? That was the question. The Tower was splendidly situated for resisting a siege, and if strongly defended, nothing short of gunpowder would take it.

After serving the writ on Mrs. Dempsey, I received on an average four or five letters a week, mostly anonymous, warning me that my life would be forfeited if I persisted in evicting the woman.

These letters were generally more strong than polite in their language. Here was the last I received. I always keep it in my pocket-book *in memoriam*—and he handed round a dirty sheet of paper, which had been merely folded, stuck together with candle grease, and posted. It was addressed :

"lovat valantine,
The Manor House,
dundrumboro,"

and contained the following:

"You bludhound if you persu your damed skame of tring to put wider dempsey out i vow your damed sowl will be sint to hel—a friend."

"Polite, isn't it? But mild, I assure you, compared with many of the productions," laughed the Friend.

Meanwhile, urged on by her Leaguer allies, Mrs. Dempsey arranged to give us as much trouble as she could in putting her out.

One night a party of masked men met at Ballynagle and cut down every tree on the place, some out of wanton spite, others were taken to the Tower, and when sawn into suitable length, were jammed into the casements, from which all the windows had been removed. The police got wind of this tree chopping expedition, and on a second attempt caught five men red-handed, who were sent to gaol for three months, that their ardour might be cooled for G.O.M.'s favourite pastime at our expense. But, undeterred by the hand of the law, the widow determined on a yet more vigorous resistance.

She and her two daughters moved into a cottage in the farm buildings, leaving her son and thirteen other desperate men—mostly tenants evicted from farms in distant counties, and imported by the Leaguers—to garrison the Tower.

These fourteen men lived entirely on the top floor, and, working with an energy worthy of a better cause, actually cut and pulled down the broad staircase and the floors beneath them, leaving only the narrow old steps in the wall by which they could reach their aerial retreat. In fact, the whole of the interior of the castle was gutted, only the underground kitchen and the top floor of all being left.

Even this did not satisfy them, for they cut holes in the one remaining floor, and carried up the winding staircase to the castle roof a goodly supply of stones to drop through the said holes on to the heads of the police and bailiffs, should they effect an entrance below.

The front door was closed and barricaded with tree stems like the windows, and the back door communicating with the narrow staircase and kitchen was sheeted with iron. The ingenuity they showed was surprising, and the amount of money wasted in destroying our property ought to be a lesson to the kind-hearted, but weak-headed people, who subscribe to help the poor down-trodden tenants in distressful Ireland.

All these preparations were made in a very short time, and being completed, the Nationalist papers published

full accounts, adding—when the half-crazy son secured a double-barrelled gun, and openly declared his intention of shooting me—that no jury, in case he did kill me, would convict him of murder, as he was so evidently irresponsible.

Now began a time of suspense for everyone concerned.

Three times we had settled everything and fixed the day and hour for the eviction, and three times the Leaguers got wind of our most secret plans.

Once I was absolutely in the train going down to meet police and bailiffs at X—— Junction, when the police officers here got a cipher telegram, and came and took me out again.

Another time they had not only half the county waiting for us at Ballynagle, but a collection of English men and women, who, searching for cheap notoriety, rushed about Ireland at that time, making stump speeches, and calling themselves the “English Convention.” They came to see the “attempted” eviction, and, I doubt not, would have made much “copy” of it, but hearing they were there, we declined to play for their piping.

How our plans leaked out we never quite knew, but we suspected a very zealous clerk of my solicitor’s, and so after a prolonged conference between the High Sheriff and Sub-Sheriff of the county, the police officers, and myself, we sent word to the lawyer that we had finally fixed a date early the following month for the eviction, come what might, and really arranged that we would carry it out the last week of the current one, that was, a fortnight before our supposed secret date.

I did not even tell my own people the real date, and when I left home they thought that I was only going to Dublin for a night or two.

I took my ticket from here to Dublin, knowing well that nearly every official on the line was some kind of Leaguer, and that if my face was not set in a directly contrary direction to the one in which I really meant to go, the fact that I was on the move would very soon be sent down to Ballynagle. So I chatted to the station

master and let drop a hint that I was going up to Dublin to see what the bigwigs thought of our tenants' tactics.

On reaching Dublin, I repaired to a friend's house, where, when I emerged from the back door, I had transformed myself (by the aid of false whiskers and a patriarchal beard) into so beautiful a commercial gentleman, that I felt sure that Nature had originally intended me for the road.

Thus disguised, I went by the next train to X—Junction, where the line branches off for Ballynagle. I put up that night at the Station Hotel, and was much amused by the landlord—a garrulous old beggar, who knew me well by sight—telling me of the row there would be next month when Mr. Valentine attempted to eject his “tinants.” Evidently my disguise was perfect.

Ballynagle is a little wayside station between X—Junction and Z—, where a great many rows were then taking place; so when a large body of police were marched into X—station the next morning, and tickets taken for them to Z—, it was not suspected that they were not really going there. Even the fact that the sheriff was with them did not apprise anyone of their real destination, for, you see, I was not on view—only a free-handed commercial gent., anxious to get on to Z—, who was being seen into an empty first-class carriage by the obsequious boots of the local hotel.

Well, off we started all rightly, and at the first stopping place the commercial gentleman whipped into the next carriage to the one he had started in, and the next moment might have been seen, *sans* hirsute appendage, discussing the day's tactics with the sheriffs, R.M., and D.I.'s. (Resident Magistrate; District Inspectors Royal Irish Constabulary).

Our plans had been very carefully laid, and seemed bound to succeed. Fifty police had been marched off in the dead of night by a lonely mountain road, towards Ballynagle. They were an escort to two carts containing scaling ladders, tents, and provisions for a week. We fully expected to have to besiege the place for some time;

we might even have to call on the regiment in the nearest garrison town to come to our assistance.

With this party went the bailiffs and five emergency men, strong fellows from the Protestant North of Ireland and from England, who for heavy wages were willing to risk their lives by occupying evicted and boycotted farms, and help in working them. They were timed to reach the nearest police barracks within sight of both railway and the Tower before light.

In these barracks they were to remain in hiding until they should see our train steam into the station, upon which they were immediately to sally forth and make for the Tower at a double, taking their scaling ladders with them. All the police were fully armed, and the emergency men had hickory axe handles—capital weapons, which I noticed were freely used by them later in the day.

In the train with me were ninety police, ten sergeants, and five D.I.'s, so that we had, all told, a little army of over one hundred and sixty men wherewith to take the Tower. The police had had buckshot cartridge served out to them, but of course were only to use them if fired upon, and even then not until they were sanctioned by the Resident Magistrate. We intended to carry out the eviction at all costs.

By my request thirty of the men, and the commanding D.I. of the expedition got ready, the moment that the train had slowed down sufficiently in entering Ballynagle Station, to leap out on the opposite side of the train from the platform, and make straight for the Tower, which was within sight about a quarter of a mile across the fields—the railway running through our land.

It was awfully exciting, as the train shut off steam before entering the station, to see the carriage doors cautiously opening, and the men hanging like bees on the steps. There we saw the Tower, and to our great delight, no signs of anyone near it, no angry crowd, to cause the bloodshed which we all so dreaded, but feared we could not avert.

Out we leapt, and in less time than I can tell it, I,

the R.M. and D.I.'s, and our thirty men were racing across the meadows at the top of our speed.

At the same moment the doors of the police barracks opened, and discharged their hidden contents, and we could see the constables carrying the ladders and running to meet us at the Tower.

Panting and breathless, but absolutely unhindered, we reached the farm, having met one man only on our way, a ploughman, who on seeing us, had forsaken his horses and fled shrieking like a demoniac to the village.

Hardly able to speak, I beckoned to two stalwart bobbies and rushed round to the little iron door leading to the only remaining staircase. It was open. Half a minute more, and a heavy stone was rolled in while the two policemen, with rifles at full cock, remained to guard it.

Following out their instructions, the police formed a cordon round the Tower, and the County Inspector in a loud voice, gave the order to arrest the first person who attempted to push down or interfere with the men on the ladders, which were now placed against the wall.

Up swarmed the emergency men, their hickory axe handles held in a tight grasp, the policemen following.

Just as they reached the summit three men's heads showed, and Dempsey, gun in hand, sprang on to the wall.

He picked me out in a moment, and with a hoarse cry, pointed his brown bess (doubtless loaded to the muzzle with buckshot and various miscellaneous articles) straight at me, but before he could pull the trigger, the bailiff's had seized and overpowered him.

"Surrender in the Queen's name," they shouted to the other two, who, seeing Dempsey's capture, gave in without very little resistance.

Our raid could not have been more successful. Counting upon our supposed secret intention to carry out the eviction next month, eleven of the fourteen men who formed the garrison had gone off to the village to meet the Organising Secretary of one of the many Leagues, who were supplying them with money and

provisions, and helping them to carry on the defence. Had they been in the Tower and expecting us, there must of necessity have been bloodshed ere we could have carried out the scheme, for we found that they had prepared a most elaborate defence, and besides the stones to drop on our heads, of which I told you, they had bags of lime to throw in our eyes, a cauldron in which to boil water and pitch for our benefit, and a store of guns, powder and shot, which they would, without doubt, have used with deadly effect.

The moment that I saw Dempsey was taken, I bethought myself of his mother and sisters, so taking two policemen, I went round the farm buildings to the cottage they were now occupying.

As we turned the corner, we ran right into a strapping wench, evidently their servant, sent to discover what all the noise was about. No sooner did she catch sight of the detested police uniforms, than she doubled back like a hare to the cottage, and we after her of course. But Biddy was too quick for us, and managed to dash into the door a yard ahead of us, and to slam it after her. However, her foremost pursuer just stuck his foot in in time, and the cottage was virtually ours.

Female shrieks galore from the back regions, and some very unfeminine language, told me that Mrs. Dempsey was at home; indeed, in half a minute she and her four daughters rushed madly out, hungering to wreak their vengeance on my devoted head. Fortunately I heard them coming, and beat a retreat, for the worst of a battle with a woman is that she can almost tear you into shreds, whilst you cannot defend yourself or retaliate. So I retired gracefully, yet swiftly, and left the bailiffs and police to complete the seizure.

Meanwhile, the main body of police had come up, and I can tell you, there was much mutual congratulation that such complete success had crowned our plans. Mrs. Dempsey and her daughters were given chairs—and were kept in them by the police, for they still yearned to mark my Grecian features with their nails—and very rapidly all their furniture and belongings were bundled

out of both Tower and cottage. The son and his two friends, handcuffed and strongly guarded, added their voices to those of the women in calling down the vengeance of heaven on my head. Like the Jackdaw of Rheims, I was cursed waking, sleeping, eating, walking, talking—everywhere and anywhere; but I can't say it has harmed me much as yet.

Well, well, I must finish up my story; the man we had first seen ploughing, having run to the village, soon spread the news of our raid.

The chapel bell was wildly rung, and although a detachment of police were sent down to stop it, the mad tocsin had roused the neighbourhood, and on all sides we heard horns going, while a crowd of people began to gather in the fields round us. But they arrived too late to do any harm. The eviction was complete, and though at one time the crowds were threatening, and one or two stones were thrown, a determined charge of the police scattered them like chaff.

The Parish Priest came hurrying up too—a nice peaceable old fellow, who collected his flock round him and commanded them to desist from any futile attempt either at a rescue, or attack on the police. So surrounded by a surging, groaning mob, who, however, kept their distance, we all sat down and fell to on our provisions, with as hearty a good will as ever hungry men did.

A funny kind of picnic, wasn't it?

Sheriffs, D.I.'s, and myself in the centre of our little army; the prisoners, now sullenly silent, surrounded by police; in the foreground, bed, chairs, pots, and pans, together with other household gods of the Dempseys; and as a background, the old Tower, with the scaling-ladders still against its walls.

The people swayed to and fro near us as the priest walked up and down threatening, beseeching, and admonishing them to keep quiet, while every now and then a deep murmur of curses, hisses, and groans rose as Mrs. Dempsey and her daughters, with wild gesticulations, called on them for help against the English "divils," which they designated us. But we were too strong a

party to be lightly attacked, and the gleaming barrels of the police rifles preached submission even more strongly than did the priest.

After seeing the emergency men comfortably settled in the Castle with all the provisions we had brought, and leaving a couple of dozen police to protect them, we—with the prisoners in the centre—marched down to the railway station, accompanied to the bitter end by the still angry crowd, and catching the afternoon train, got back into X——, tired more with the tension and anxiety, than by bodily labour.”

“And is that the end?” asked the English Visitor. “Did you have no more trouble?”

“Just one thing more. That night in X—— the police insisted on following me about wherever I went, though I scoffed at their precautions. However, just as I was leaving the County Club to go to my hotel, I noticed, by the light of the rather dim lamps, two men opposite, who, on seeing me, separated, one coming over to the footpath I was on, and the other one walking on the far side.

Not caring to walk alongside either of them, I took the middle of the road, but I had not gone many steps when they both left the paths, and meeting in the middle of the road, turned suddenly, and, together, waited for me. I own I was in a terrible fright, and almost instinctively I sprang back, when, to my intense relief, I heard a police-whistle.

You can imagine my thankfulness when my guardian angels, the police, appeared out of the darkness behind. The two men did not wait for them, however, but at the first sound of the police whistle they separated and took to their heels, diving down the dark little side streets, the constables after them.

I thought I saw one man drop something as he ran, and had curiosity enough to go and search for what had fallen, and sure enough I found a fine pointed dagger-like knife of foreign make.”

“Great Heavens!” burst from the English Visitor. “Would they have murdered you?”

The Friend shrugged his shoulders. "So the police seem to think, but as we didn't catch the man, we can't be sure."

"If they had, my dear fellow," said O'Connell, "it would only have been a fresh argument in favour of a yet more extensive Land Bill, or some new Evicted Tenants' measure ; so let's be thankful you escaped."

"But won't this Unionist Government——" began the England Visitor, her eyes shining like two great stars.

Everyone laughed except the Master. He said words that are not to be recorded.

"Stop swearing, Maurice," cried Betty severely, "though I own you have provocation. Kindly remember, my dear," turning to the English Visitor, who was covering her ears with two much-bejewelled hands, "*not* to mention the present Government in the hearing of an Irish landlord. The subject is prone to give rise to cursing and bitterness, and much uncharitableness. We prefer the Death Duties, our mortgages, or the uncertainty of life, as topics of light conversation. Come now, we'll go into the drawing-room and have some music."

The English Visitor rose gracefully, and put a protecting arm round Betty's waist as they went down the hall together.

"How delightful it is to hear your silk petticoats rustle so when you walk," remarked Madame O'Connell. "It gives one such an idea of 'richness'—a strange and delicious sensation in Ireland."

ANDREW MERRY.

The True Story of Lady Hamilton.

A STRANGE, degraded, and yet, to be antithetical, exalted career was that of Emma Lady Hamilton. Deadly as any fabled siren of old did she prove to be to two famous men of her time, causing the brush of one to become incapable of portraying aught but memories of her lovely face, and dulling the moral principles and noble career of the other. And this by no high qualities of mind and *esprit*, but solely by the fascination of her mere physical charms, for contemporaries of hers have recorded that she retained to the last the common tastes and ways of thinking acquired in her unlettered childhood.

Yet her beauty is undeniable, and of a kind that strangely belies her life. We see a sweet, candid face, framed by auburn curls, with innocent blue eyes under arched brows, a complexion of "milk and roses," a dainty, aquiline nose, a full pouting mouth, a swanlike throat, a tall, lithe figure, with draperies arranged to conceal the large feet and clumsy ankles—the one marring point in the exquisite whole—looking down on us from the canvasses of Romney. And as we look, our wonder at her power somewhat diminishes, and we think not of the insolent mistress who cruelly wrung the suffering, broken heart of Lady Nelson, nor the faithless, deceiving wife, the lightminded, light moralled Circe, but of what this fair girl might have been under different circumstances.

Emma Lyon was born on April 26th, 1763, to the wife of a smith at Great Neston, Cheshire, and baptised in 1765 (the year of her father's death) as *Amy*. Little did the neighbours think as they watched this pretty bare-footed child running about, and compassionated her poverty-stricken life, of what she was to become. To all seeming then, she would grow up, marry, and live the

struggling, obscure life of a labourer's wife. At the age of 12 she entered the service of Dr. Thomas of Hawarden, as nursemaid, in which capacity she went at 16, to Dr. Budd of Chatham Place, Blackfrairs. There she acquired an excessive fondness for amusements, and especially for the theatre, often amusing her fellow servants with imitations of the various actors. And with it, unfortunately, "a boldness which proved the leading feature of her character through life, to which her ruin was owing in the first instance, and which confirmed her in habits of intrigue and extravagance." Soon after her arrival in London she visited Captain Willet Payne, to obtain the release of a friend who had been impressed for sea. Struck by the beauty of the vain little serving-girl he granted her request, and flattered her to her ruin. Soon wearying of her, he handed her and her babychild over, with her consent, to Sir Harry Featherstonhaugh of Up Park, Sussex. There she reigned for a year as nominal mistress, despised by the servants who did her bidding, and with only Sir Harry's rough sporting friends to share in her riotous amusements. He, in 1781, deserted her, leaving her friendless and destitute in London, to begin another phase in the see-saw career of the future Ambassadors. We next hear of her as exhibiting herself in the Temple of Health, as "Hebe Vestina, the rosy goddess of health," and attracting by her beauty of form and face large and admiring crowds.

Among them came Romney, the painter, then at the zenith of his fame. He saw and was conquered. She slipped down from her throne and became his model. Posing in varied and conflicting characters—a Circe, a Magdalene, a Calypso, a Bacchante (done for the Prince of Wales), St. Cecilia and Miranda. While she played the modern Phryne in artistic Bohemia, she posed to her landlady as a demure, industrious needlewoman, too timid and modest to know aught of the vices of London life. And in this rôle she angled for, and captured, the wary, fickle Charles Greville, second son of the Earl of Warwick. His surprise and disgust when he discovered the true disposition and character of the innocent, rustic maiden,

whose young affections he had won with so much difficulty, were outspoken. Her wit and duplicity had been a match for the man of the world, and they lived together for four years. Whilst with him at her splendid house in Paddington Green she sent for her mother, who remained ever after with her. But that there can be no happiness or duration in illicit love was again exemplified in Emma Lyon's case. Ruin began to stare them in the face, her protector was weary of her and her extravagant ways, and desired to make a *marriage de convenance*. At this juncture, 1786, his uncle, Sir William Hamilton, Ambassador at Naples, appeared upon the scene. And we next hear of her with him in Naples, studying singing and dancing, for which arts she had considerable talent. That he knew of her true position in his nephew's household would be too infamous to be credited. But for her behaviour no excuse can be offered; her elasticity of conscience is amazing as well as saddening. She seems to have been utterly devoid of moral principle. Ambition and luxurious living were the objects of her life. She determined to be revenged on her faithless lover, and obtained her desire. They returned to London in 1791, when she must have been about twenty-eight, and were privately married in Marylebone Church.

Curious, novelty-loving society received her with open arms, and she entertained them with exhibitions of her acting and singing, receiving, it is said, an offer from a manager of one of the theatres to star in a play. Whether she resumed her friendship with Romney is uncertain. She did visit him once, and then in the fantastic garb of a Turkish lady. The doors of the Court, however, remained obstinately shut to her. On their return to Naples she speedily became a great favourite with the Queen, over whom she gained a powerful ascendancy. The cast-off mistress was now the leading spirit in the wild revels of the dissolute Court, and an unscrupulous intriguer in the turbulent politics of Naples, surprising and betraying secrets of the admiring, confiding king, for her own purposes. Nelson and the fleet were stationed there, and he became the guest of the Embassy, with

what fatal results the world too well knows. On his return, in 1798, as Victor of the Nile, she greeted him by fainting away in his arms on the deck of his ship. This was the beginning of the inevitable end, where an unscrupulous, beautiful woman and a willing Ulysses are concerned. Yet in December of that year she dared to write to Lady Nelson, whose peace and happiness she was seeking to destroy, and say, "We only want you to be completely happy!"

Her ascendancy over the lingering, fascinated Nelson was such that he became the supporter of the Court he had stigmatised as infamous, and assisted the Royal Family and Lady Hamilton in their escape to Naples. Indifferent to her country's honour, she kept him captive at her side when duty called him to be elsewhere. And the Sicilians beheld the sorry spectacle of the world's greatest sailor subservient to a woman's whim and will. Strange happenings took place. Often in the evenings she would accompany him, disguised as a sailor, in his nocturnal rambles through Palermo, and at one of the banquets, given, of all places, on his warship, she appeared as Cleopatra, and declared that there was not one virtuous woman present, which does not speak well for her choice of friends, as she chose and invited the guests. At her instigation, Nelson punished with rigid severity the leaders of the revolution in Naples, among whom were several personal enemies of hers. So notorious and injurious became her power over Nelson, that Sir Arthur Paget—a hater of Lady Hamilton—was sent to supersede Sir William, to her outspoken wrath. But this step achieved little good. Nelson followed, a willing victim in her chains, on their leisurely way home through Europe, resigning his command to do so, and proclaiming to the world his mad infatuation. Before leaving Naples, Lady Hamilton was decorated by Emperor Paul with the Cross of Malta, and at the request of the King she had so often betrayed, and whose wife she was soon going to expose, she had a nude statue of herself modelled to adorn the royal apartments. She made no secret of her conquest of and intimacy with Nelson,

rather parading it before London Society. So insolent she grew that she actually insulted Lady Nelson at her own table, and unreprieved. Once only did Nelson rebel, and that in his wife's presence, when he told Lady Hamilton that "her soul was as black as hell," for that she was constantly poisoning his mind against his injured wife. A feeble outburst, for soon afterwards he left his wife for ever, and took up his residence, to Society's blank amazement, in Sir William's household. Lady Hamilton managed this extraordinary arrangement, by playing upon her confiding husband's sympathies with a pitiable tale of Nelson's unhappy domestic life, that led him to immediately offer him house-room.

Lady Hamilton at this miserable crisis was no *ingénue* carried away by her passions, as her defenders imply, but a mature woman of 37, skilled in all manner of artifice and intrigue, and he a disfigured man over 40. She sinned intentionally, premeditatedly from ambition, not love, and shrunk at nothing to achieve her end. So cleverly did she deceive her trusting old husband, that he never knew of the birth of a child in the year 1801, beneath his very roof, to the guilty pair. On his death-bed he consigned her into the care of Nelson, with a fervent "God bless you!" and turning his dying eyes upon his faithless wife, addressed her thus: "My incomparable Emma, you have never in thought, word, or deed offended me . . . all the time of our ten years' happy union!" And yet no remorse, no shame, seems to have stricken her at these undeserved words of praise, or turned her from her downward course. She left his death-bed to retire with Nelson to his country house at Merton, where they actually prayed for the death of his suffering wife, and a second daughter was born, who died in infancy.

Ever fond of theatrical display, Lady Hamilton, we are told, shortly after Nelson's death, in 1805, attended a theatre, where, during the play, the song "The Death of Nelson," was sung, and showed her emotion by fainting away. This she did, not once, but four nights in succession. By his will she received his diamond cross,

Merton Place, £2000, an annuity of £500 a year, and the interest of £4000 that was settled upon his daughter Horatia. Yet so extravagantly did she live, that within three years she owed £18,000, when the Duke of Queensberry came to her relief, settling on her a house at Richmond and willing her a £1000.

Dark days were coming upon the fading beauty, and as they came her sycophantic courtiers deserted her. She was to learn that vice has "a sting at the tail of it" that none can escape from.

In 1813 the adored mistress of Nelson was arrested and imprisoned for debt. On her liberation she fled to Calais, and there, grown corpulent and bilious from indulgent living and uncurbed passions, she died on January 12th, 1815, in her fifty-second year. Such was the pitiable end of this fascinating, unprincipled woman, who rose from an unlettered nurse-girl to be an Ambassadors, and one of the most notorious women of her age. On gazing on her lovely portraiture by Romney, we can but exclaim :

O, what a mansion have those vices got
Which for their habitation chose out thee,
Where beauty's veil doth cover every blot,
And all things turn to fair that eye can see.

Ajmere and the "Mount of Wisdom."

A MASSIVE red sandstone wall, sun-dyed and hoary, surrounds the ancient city of Ajmere. Slim brown minarets and bulbous domes rise above the loop-holed battlements, and the fantastic crags of the precipitous Tarraga overhang the grand old town, which lies in the shadow of the menacing rocks. Terraced gardens and cloistered colonnades flank a shallow lake, sown thickly with waving canes, and flaxen plumes of pampas grass root themselves on the sandy soil, strewn with architectural relics of the age when the luxury of India reached a climax under the Mogul Monarchy. The Mohammedan element still predominates in the city hallowed by the famous Dargah, a ring of clustering mosques round the tomb of a Moslem saint revered in the reign of the Emperor Akbar as a prophet and seer.

Fanatical dervishes glance scornfully at the unbelievers who approach the shrine, and a wild-eyed "*Hadji*," whose green turban proclaims that he has accomplished the sacred pilgrimage to Mecca, rushes into the outer court to insist upon the removal of our shoes before we venture to cross the holy threshold. The straw cradles with which the faithless Frank is usually allowed to compromise the matter without discarding his boots are not forthcoming, so we meekly patter in our stockings across the sun-warmed marbles of endless quadrangles, with latent misgivings as to the fate of the shoes left in the care of an evil-looking Dervish, whose one eye suggests a depth of depravity which six pair of ordinary optics would fail to express.

Aisles of horse-shoe arches and slender Saracenic columns approach the tessellated pavement, whereon the alabaster sarcophagus of Mounedeen stands in the midst

of the architectural maze. Screens of fretted marble lace veil the turbanned tomb, and the shallow steps are hollowed by the knees of generations of pilgrims. Persian texts from the Koran twine over arch and column, suggesting the culture of the ancient race which produced the very poetry of calligraphy in symbols of incomparable beauty. Ajmere has lately celebrated the *Moharrem* with ceremonial observances of barbaric pomp and splendour. This popular festival commemorates the martyrdom of the sons of Ali, immediately descended from the Prophet, and slain by the rival claimants to the spiritual supremacy of the Mohammedan world.

The religious prejudices, so quickly fanned into flame among the fiery children of Islam, are now at fever heat, after the whirl of excitement during a function which invariably convulses an Indian city of conflicting creeds. An *émeute* of the entire population is a frequent *finale* to this Moslem solemnity, for the misguided zeal of some enthusiastic worshipper generally impels him to throw a skin of beef into a Hindú temple, as a wanton insult to the creed which exalts the sacred cord to a quasi-divine position in the economy of Nature. The relations between Hindú and Mohammedan are thus strained to breaking point; the divergences of the religious ideal in two fanatical races renders mutual toleration impossible. The innumerable deities of Brahminism and the stern monotheism of Islam admit of no reconciliation, and perpetual friction at length produces the inevitable blaze.

Under a marble dome, where white doves coo and flutter in the undisturbed security granted by the Moslem to his sacred "*birds of the Holy Ghost*," a Dervish instructs his disciples in the *Sunna*, a mystical treatise placed on a level with the Koran, but only imposed on candidates for the strictest religious orders. The rapt face and flashing eyes of the turbanned priest express intense zeal, and absorption in the subject of his address blinds him to the indifference of the neophytes, until a suppressed giggle from the inattentive class at length reaches his indignant ears, and he pauses in his oration to administer a sounding blow on the cheek to the nearest

boy. Gravity is quickly restored, and the dark face of the lecturer resumes the abstracted look momentarily disturbed by the juvenile frivolity of his pupils.

A long avenue of tremulous peepul trees leads from the Dargah to the Hindú quarter of the city. The ancient groves of sacred trees illustrates the pantheism which underlies and colours modern Brahminism. Gnarled trunks invested with the sacred thread are embraced by the pilgrims, who wander round the leafy temple of Nature, rosary in hand, muttering endless supplications and chanting Vedic hymns in guttural tones. Popular belief attributes occult virtues to the peepul, regarding it as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and also as an infallible test of character. An oath taken in the shadow of the fluttering leaves is an inviolable bond, and the holy tree is only planted in the precincts of temple or shrine, for the native merchant shrinks from carrying out the chicaneries of trade in sight of the fetish which inspires him with superstitious awe. The ceaseless whisper of the delicate foliage is regarded as the voice of Brahma, and the woodland haunt of divinity is never injured or destroyed by the devout Hindú or Buddhist worshipper. Branches broken off by the wind are solemnly cremated after being borne in procession through the temple courts, and the venerable "*Ficus Religiosa*" lives to a fabulous age. The present monarch of the species was undoubtedly planted before the Christian era, and was only an offshoot of the still more ancient and celebrated peepul tree, of Buddha-Gya, beneath which the Prince Gautama received his mystic call to the pre-Christian apostolate of primitive Asia.

The planting of the sapling is accompanied by religious rites, prayer being offered to Vishnu the Preserver that the meritorious work may be rewarded by the heavenly life symbolised by the peepul, the emblem of eternity. Many of the Ajmere temples were converted into mosques when the great wave of Mohammedan invasion swept across India, and a Jain sanctuary on a spur of the Tarraga hill is still known as *The Mosque of Two Days and a Half*, from the short time which sufficed to change

it into a temple of Islam. The sculptured pillars were defaced and mutilated by the Moslem iconoclasts, but the lotus-flowers which remained untouched in the dim distance of the vaulted roof are miracles of exquisite carving. The blind fury of the fanatical zealots overlooked the sculptured details in the gloom of arch or shrine, and imagination restores the lost loveliness of the ancient temple. From these relics of a dead past, crushed beneath the iron heel of the relentless Moslem power, traces of Scythic influence and invasion colour local annals, and neighbouring tribes show marks of Scythic descent, in fairer skins and features cast in a softer mould than those of pure-blooded Hindú and bearded Moslem. The women of Ajmere load their slight forms with fantastic ornaments—bangles of glass, silver, and copper, cover their thin brown arms to the elbow; heavy anklets impede the freedom of their gait, and toes covered with brazen rings suggest ideas of perpetual torture. A fence of glittering earrings and golden filagree surrounds ears deformed by the weight of garnet and turquoise drops, nose-rings set with coral and amber conceal mouth and chin, and render eating a *tour de force*. The Moham-medan maiden of the higher class, with green veil and nose-ring of flawed ruby or *tallow-drop* emerald, is sometimes encountered in the "ladies' carriage" of Indian railways, and as she divests herself of the multiplied folds of muslin which shroud face and figure from the profane gaze of man, she reveals a picturesque costume of gold-embroidered silk, her delicate beauty and simplicity of demeanour redolent of girlish innocence and quaint charm. The preference for flawed jewels originated in the idea that the flaw proves the genuine stone, as no manufacturer of imitation *bijouterie* would copy a defective gem.

Ajmere is the educational centre to which native magnates resort for instruction in those branches of knowledge practically enforced by Government on the tributary princes of the British Empire. The scheme of education in the magnificent Mayo College perpetuates the work of the ill-starred Governor-General who cemented

the union of the Indian peninsula by bringing the lamp of learning into the dark hands of ignorance and superstition. The gigantic proportions of the collegiate buildings may be estimated from the fact that each prince occupies a separate palace in the extensive park which surrounds the academical establishment, in order that the pomp and circumstance so dear to the ostentatious taste of the haughty native ruler may still encompass him during the years of tutelage. A gorgeous retinue attends him ; libraries, lecture-rooms, and museums minister to his profit and pleasure ; while a staff of instructors, native and foreign, seek to instil the subtle Oriental mind with the elements of that wide and liberal culture which changes a despotic tyrant into an enlightened ruler. A young Rajah, in pink turban and English frock-coat, curvets down an avenue of neem trees on a prancing Arab, and a score of gaily-clad attendants clatter after their royal master through the leafy glades of the noble park. The hall of philosophy contains a crowd of students taking notes of a lecture in Hindostani, and at the long table of a vaulted class-room, dark but high-bred faces bend over papers covered with mathematical problems.

A ramble through the dusky bazaars of the crumbling city presents a succession of dissolving views, which transport thought and feeling from the prosaic nineteenth century to the world's golden age.

Unchanged amid the changing years, Ajmere retains the aspect of the vanished past, and the lapse of time which in the Western world obliterates the ancient landmarks as with the rush of a surging sea, flows so gently over the old-world cities of this Eastern land, that it scarcely marks the flight of ages, while life perpetuates itself in the old groove, and clothes itself in the identical colouring of the past which lives in the present, and projects itself into the future. On the western horizon a range of jungle-clad hills towers above a plain of dull pink sand, which stretches northward in unbroken monotony to the great Indian desert. Flaxen plumes of pampas grass wave in the wind, and rose-throated cranes preen

their grey plumage on the margin of marshy "jheels" overshadowed by the frowning range known as Mount Abu, "The Mount of Wisdom," a centre of pilgrimage revered by the Hindú, but esteemed as the Holy of Holies by the Jains. The silence and seclusion of the purple peaks appealed to the mystic tendencies of a community which sought isolation from the world as a necessary condition of the highest religious life. In the stillness of the everlasting hills the devout Jain listened for the divine accents which he termed *The Voice of the Silence*, and the temples of his faith were raised on the mountain tops to teach the toiling pilgrim that the spiritual temple of the soul must be built up by pain and patience. The Jains were formerly regarded as an offshoot of Buddhism, but modern research proves the independent origin of the curious sect, and a mystic treatise of pre-Buddhistic days implies an origin of almost fabulous antiquity. Special stress is laid upon the doctrine of re-incarnation, and reverence for the lowest animal life as a spark of divinity is carried to excess.

The Jains derive their name from the word *Jina*, "*the victorious one*," a term applied to a conquering saint who by painful discipline attains divine perfection, uniting himself with the Supreme Power which inspires his progress from the things of Time and sense to the mystic heights of eternal wisdom. The Jain scriptures are known as the *Agamas*, and both the pantheistic theology of the Vedas and the Puranic mythology of the Brahmin are alike rejected by the faithful adherents of this old-world creed.

The Jains are divided into two orders, the "white-clothed" and the "sky-clothed," a sharp line of demarcation being drawn between the *esoteric* and *exoteric* sides of their creed. The *white-clothed* disciple dwells in the outer courts of the spiritual temple, but the *sky-clothed* initiate penetrates the occult region of mysterious darkness which veils the inmost shrine. This twofold aspect of Eastern creeds increased their power over the uninitiated multitude, whose obedience to religious precepts was enhanced by appeals to superstitious fears excited

by mystical rites, from which the common herd was excluded. The idea of pilgrimage was an integral part of the Jain system, and the sacred books contain repeated allusions to the practice imposed upon the faithful follower of the Jain traditions.

"Lay aside thy sins ere the first step of the solemn journey be taken."

"The star which is thy goal burns ever overhead."

"The rugged path winds ever uphill; thrice blest is he who gains the summit."

"Nightingales of hope chant to fearless pilgrims, and sunny glades pierce the forest darkness, but grey mist veils the stony heights and pebbles bruise the weary feet."

"When the goal is won, Nature thrills with joy: the silver star twinkles the glad tidings to the night-blooming flowers; the brook ripples it to the stones over which it flows; perfumed breezes sing it to the vales, and stately pines whisper it in mysterious murmurs."

Translation inevitably weakens Eastern imagery, and conveys but a faint impression of the beauty of the ethical work from whence these quotations are taken; a spiritual manual of unknown authorship, but probably a collection of sacred maxims culled from various sources by the ancient initiates for the benefit of their disciples. The devotional books of India echo the manifold voices of Nature, and regard it as the manifestation of Divinity to the human soul. Every note in the scale of sound, from the roll of thunder to the hum of a bee, spoke with mystic meaning to the Oriental minds which so early grasped the truth wrested from Greek Pantheism by Christianity—that *"of the many different voices in the world none is without signification."*

A precipitous pathway winds upward for fifteen miles to the sacred summit of Mount Abu, and symbolises the narrow way to Heaven approached by pilgrim feet through thorns of suffering and rocks of difficulty. Bamboos shade the forest track where it plunges into the green heart of the tangled jungle, and imagination pictures the terrors of the haunted woods which in ancient times sheltered nearly every savage animal of India; leopards,

bears, and wolves still prowl in the deep recesses of the matted undergrowth, and though the tiger is driven from his lair in the caverns and thickets of this woodland wilderness, Mount Abu is still the Paradise of sportsmen. European pilgrims surmount the perils of the way in a rickshaw, pushed by four brown coolies in native undress, and nothing more alarming than a glancing lizard or striped "*guruli*" crosses our path, for the heavy heat of noon hushes the slumbering woods, the wild beasts are asleep in their dens, and the solemn silence of the forest remains unbroken. On emerging from a black canopy of interlacing trees, the bearers suggest, with deep salaams, that the "governing ladies" should halt for an hour's repose, and the willing coolies after refreshing their inner man with betel-nut smeared with lime, and wrapped in a cool green leaf, fall asleep, their open scarlet mouths dyed with the deep red juice, and making a ghastly contrast to the uniform brown of face and figure. We wake to the freshening air of the waning afternoon; soft breezes beckon us onward to the cooler heights from whence they draw their breath; and at length a white village on the green shore of a shining lake cheers flagging energies with the hope of attaining the goal. We pass through a rocky defile to the edge of a cliff known as Sunset Point. The blue plain, dim with evening mist, lies five thousand feet below, but through a natural arch of the river crags we seem walking into the golden gates of dying day, through billows of rosy cloud which roll in fantastic wreaths around our path. The world below changes from blue to violet and darkens into the shadows of night, while the mountain top is still bathed in a radiant sea of amber light. In the contrast of gloom and glow between the heaven above and the earth beneath, the native mind recognises a supernatural phenomenon of the sacred hill, for the weird apparition impresses itself, with startling effect on the pilgrim of the plains, unaccustomed to the glory of sunset on a mountain summit. The rich perfume of *stephanotis* fills the air, scarlet *hybiscus* trees flame into transparency beneath the warm light of the golden West, and climbing roses drape the deep verandahs

of flower-wreathed bungalows which rise among the wooded hollows of the sacred height. The sun smiles below the horizon ; the indescribable purple bloom of the Indian evening stains the sky, and as the quivering flush dies away through the infinite gradations of tender colouring, the rising moon lifts her silver shield above the shoulder of the highest peak, and transforms the scene into the chiaroscuro of a delicate etching.

The magnificent Dilwara temples, four in number, are erected at a still greater altitude than the little hill station. These great Jain sanctuaries are built in the form of a cross, as though some dim realisation of the value attached to this sacred sign had penetrated through the mysticism of Jain philosophy. The present temples date back to the eleventh century, and the costly marbles of the mighty structures were transported hither at incalculable expense and toil. The sanctuary raised by the Jain Prince, Vincala Suh, whose equestrian statue adorns the noble quadrangle, shows external traces of decay, but the carving of the columned aisles, untouched by the lapse of eight hundred years, looks sharp and clear as though fresh from the sculptor's chisel. A colossal statue of Parswanatha, the deified Coryphæus, or leader of the sacred choir, occupies a prominent position in the adytum, and marble reliefs on frieze and pediment suggest the chorus of Greek tragedy, the details of Greek drama bearing a marked resemblance to the ancient order of Oriental ritual. The twenty-four marble *Tirthankas*, or deified heroes and saints, sit cross-legged in passionless calm beneath the fluted and twisted convolutions of the debased but richly-decorated architecture, and the diamond-studded eyes of these mystical *Zimas*, who humanise an ethical philosophy into a creed, give a realistic aspect to the white statue in each fretted niche of cloister and temple. Ivory elephants stand beneath fantastic arches festooned with alabaster embroidery, sacred birds and animals are chiselled in high relief amid the lotus flowers and palms which wreath the marble columns, and each carven figure shows the keen observation of animal life common to the sect which reveres the lowest form of

existence as an emanation of deity. The officiating priest of a Jain temple binds a wisp of filmy muslin round his mouth as he recites the ritual of his creed, fearing that the accidental swallowing of a fly may render him unfit for the exercise of his sacred calling until purified by severe penance from the involuntary fault, and the numerous Indian hospitals for sick and wounded animals are chiefly supported by the wealthy Jain community, forbidden to destroy the sick and sorry which would elsewhere be put to death as an act of mercy. The gorgeous temples with their elaborate ornaments and sensuous imagery have been interpreted as representations of carnal temptation, sin and pleasure, while the stern and ascetic simplicity of the marble *Tirthankas* headed by Adinatte, the deified hero, who leads the sacred band, denotes the contrasting virtue of the discipline which moulds the saintly character.

Strangers are forbidden to witness the rites of worship, for the wise policy of the British Government protects the liberties of the Eastern subject in all matters of faith and practice which are not prejudicial to the common interests of the Indian Empire.

In the hush of the mountain solitude these stately temples immortalise the story of the Indian past, although the sermon in marble is written for the most in a forgotten language of which modern minds grasp but a dim and imperfect idea. Tessellated floor and vaulted roof veiled with swinging webs and richest marble lace, fretted screen and sculptured pillar, adorned with equal beauty in shadowy aisle steeped in perpetual darkness and sunny court filled with the golden light of day, imply a firm belief in the doctrine that "the gods see everywhere." The union between art and religion, the strenuous effort after perfection in detail, and the sacrifice of the costliest offerings on the altar of faith, appear as fundamental ideas of the Jain philosophy, but the Mount of Wisdom still veils her mysteries from the gaze of the uninitiated, and modern thought fails to penetrate the thick curtain which hangs before the secret shrine.

Unbroken silence reigns on the wild hillside, and as we

descend into the world of men a white mantle of drifting vapour rises in ghostly folds from a dark ravine, and conceals the Dilwara temples, as though the guardian *Tirthankas* resented intrusion of profane and curious gazers into the consecrated precincts of the mountain sanctuaries. The monsoon has wept itself away, and the spring-like verdure of the sacred hill wears that transient freshness of colour which vanishes almost at birth, in the fierce heat of the ardent Eastern sun. The glimmering emerald of the delicate robe which wraps the torrid land for a few short weeks, is indescribably lovely. Soft mosses drape the forest trees, the blue lotus studs the shallow pools, and a world of flowers carpets the shady dells which vary the monotony. The momentary twilight of India merges into night as we reach the sandy plain at the foot of the mountain range, but the holy hill rises from the surrounding gloom bathed in the lingering light of a golden sky, and the soaring crest glows like a flaming torch above the mists and shadows of the darkening earth.

EMILY A. RICHINGS.

Poor Little Fingers and Feet.

CHILDREN of the rich, read this, and learn to think of the hundreds of poor children who sit hour after hour when not at school, or when they leave school, working away with busy little fingers in different factories, so as to earn a few shillings to bring home to "mother." You think yourselves badly treated if you are not allowed to play every hour of the day, but how much play do these children get? Generally, when they arrive home, they have to help look after the baby, do housework, or run errands. You think yourselves hardly used if you are not permitted to over-eat yourself or eat what is not good for you; but poor children have often to be content not only with very little food, but, frequently, very bad food. You consider yourselves cruelly treated if corrected for your faults, but many of these poor children are beaten and knocked about for no fault whatever, but because their father or mother have been drinking.

If, instead of grumbling at your own little trivial troubles, you rich, well-cared-for, well-clothed, well-fed children were to try and save your money to give these poor city children a week at the seaside, which could be done for five shillings, and worked half-an-hour every day at making clothes for them, you would be happy yourself and make them happy.

Now this is how factory children pass their day. In the first place, children may not be employed at all until they are over eleven years old, and not then unless they have passed a certain examination at school; and they must still go to school when not at factory work

until between the ages of 13 and 14, when they may leave school altogether if they have reached a standard of proficiency or attended school a certain number of times. A child between 11 and 13 may work in a factory in the morning, and attend school in the afternoon; or go to school in the morning, and to the factory in the afternoon, unless employed on what is called the "alternate day system," which is that one day they go to school and the next day work in the factory; but Saturday no school attendance is required, while Saturday is also more free from factory work and certain holidays and half-holidays allowed under the Factory Acts.

Except on school mornings, children must be at the factory at 6 a.m., 7 a.m., or 8 a.m., in a non-textile factory according to the rules of the proprietor, though the last named hour is generally the fixed time during the winter months unless there is a press of work. Even eight o'clock seems early for children to have to turn out in cold, biting weather of Winter, especially if they live at a distance which means getting up about six or seven. Think of these poor little boys and girls, many badly clad and badly fed, standing shivering at the factory gates and a few minutes later working with blue, stiff fingers at their allotted task till welcome meal time releases them, half past twelve or one o'clock being the dinner hour. If it is on the alternate day system, which is only allowed in factories and not in workshops, children begin work again after dinner and go on till six or seven or eight o'clock. If it is the morning set system they go to school in the afternoon, unless being of the age of 13 and having passed the necessary standard employed, makes the child rank as a young person, in which case he or she would continue work again in the afternoon up to six or seven o'clock.

In many factories the children are very well treated. I remember going over one where the owners were most kind and considerate to the hundreds employed, and in this factory children were especially looked after. I saw three little girls engaged in cutting up candied fruit, an easy and pleasant occupation and one that certainly did them no harm to judge by their healthy, contented faces.

Perhaps there is no other factory in the world where religion is made the mainspring of so much wise and practical benefit by masters to employees, and the morning prayers that begin the work in this factory must therefore make a sincere impression for good on the workers. As regards the children there was a playground for them when well, a convalescent home when ill while on rainy days their coats and boots are dried by hot air before being put on again when returning home. A cup of cocoa, coffee, or tea, and a biscuit is given to each at their employers' expense before leaving the factory in winter. They also provide a lending library, where suitable books can be borrowed by the workers, and as there are about fifteen hundred women and children, and four or five hundred men, who all enjoy this and similar privileges at the expense of their masters, it is very evident that the employees benefit as well as the employers from the large profits made.

Unfortunately, however, for humanity in general and factory workers in particular, such masters are rare, and to counterbalance this factory Elysium, there are hundreds of places where children have to submit to negligence, indifference, or cruelty, so long as ill-treatment is kept within the Factory Acts. One of the worst forms of cruelty is the association of young children with those men and women who have no respect for childhood, for in such association children become contaminated, and injured incalculably at the most impressionable age of their lives by bad example and vile language. This is their great moral danger, and no one is more to blame than masters and managers, who ought to spare them such contamination. Instead, they often add their own bushel of wickedness by teaching children to tell falsehoods from fear, and to act deceitfully during the visits of inspectors, who, without exception, have especially the welfare of factory children at heart. When more lucky children scream the house down should they have a slight fall or cut a finger, I think it would do them good if their mothers and nurses were to read to them the following list of accidents that happened to factory children of

between the ages of eleven and fourteen during one year alone :

Causing death	...	...	...	...	5
Loss of right hand or arm...	...	...	...	...	1
Loss of part of right hand...	...	...	...	...	30
Loss of part of left hand	...	...	...	...	17
Loss of part of leg or foot	...	...	...	...	1
Fracture of limbs or bones of trunk	...	...	...	...	19
Fracture of hand or foot	...	...	...	...	10
Injuries to hand and face	...	...	...	...	13
Burns and scalds	...	...	...	...	4
Lacerations, contusions, and other injuries					
not enumerated above	...	...	...	...	172
Total	...	...	...	...	272

Of this number, 199 were boys and 73 were girls.

Though children are not allowed by Act of Parliament to clean machinery in motion, to work between the fixed and traversing part of any self-acting machinery in motion, or to be employed in any dangerous or unhealthy occupations, yet with all these precautions the above list shows a terrible total in accidents alone. It is dreadful enough when grown-up people get maimed, but it seems much more dreadful when children are disabled at what ought to be the best and brightest part of their life, and have many years before them through which to struggle for their daily bread, handicapped by the loss of a limb or an eye.

I only wish mothers would try to interest their well-guarded children in the many poor crippled children in London homes and elsewhere. If rich mothers would now and then go to one of these homes and take out some of these poor little cripples for a drive in their comfortable carriage, what happiness and often health they would bring into many sad young lives, and what a beautiful sermon would this act preach to their own children, when they in turn grow up. Should anyone wish to help these little ones I could send them the addresses of two or three homes in London for cripple children, so that they could communicate direct with the superintendents of these institutions.

B. S. KNOLLYS.

The Stage.

MANY of my country readers will now be coming to town, and therefore it will be useful to know some of the new arrangements at the theatres. "Julius Cæsar" has been taken off at Her Majesty's after a most successful run, and is followed by "Ragged Robin," adapted from Richepin's play "Le Chemineau," by Mr. Louis Napoleon Parker. When I say "is followed," I must protect myself by saying that at the time of writing definite arrangements had been made, but after all "Man proposes and God disposes," and considerable time must elapse between the time this brief article goes to the printers and the time the magazine is in the hands of my readers. "The Heart of Maryland," at the Adelphi, is to be followed at the end of July or the beginning of August by a new drama from the pen of Mr. George R. Sims. There is a new Russian drama at the Avenue called "The Convert." The author was the late Sergius Stepniak, but as I have not yet had an opportunity of seeing the piece I cannot express an opinion on it. The 500th performance of "La Poupee," at the Prince of Wales's, was on June 25th, and Mr. Lowenfeld arranged to give the whole of the proceeds to the Actors' Orphanage Fund. Mr. P. Forbes-Robertson and Mrs. Patrick Campbell have started their "Pelleas and Melisande" matinees at the Prince of Wales's. The Garrick Theatre has been well filled during the run of "Too Much Johnson," which is now followed by "Sue," and "The Runaway Girl" at the Gaiety has been greatly run after. In fact, there is plenty to see now at the theatres. The music-halls, too, are going strong, and I witnessed a very good programme at the Oxford quite recently.

THE PLAYGOER.

BELGRAVIA

AUGUST, 1898.

St. Philip's-on-the-Sea: A Novel.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A BAD FALL.

DOLLY had received Mary Waddell's despairing and tear-blotted letter on the morning of the all-important Regimental Races ; it was, as Mary had feared, a terrible blow to him, and all the more terrible because it was unexpected. Strenuous opposition from his father he had, indeed, looked for, and often and often had his heart sank as he remembered Mr. Lamley's pride and obstinacy; still, he had not altogether been without hope, for, if Mr. Lamley was obstinate, Dolly could be obstinate too ; one thing he was determined upon—nothing should make him give up Mary. He was not without some inklings as to the state of affairs between his father and Mrs. Laver, and to her intercession, and interest, of which he was assured, he had looked for a pleasant and happy solution of his love difficulties. That Mary herself would ever give in, was a thought that never even entered into his head ; that she loved him fondly and truly he knew, and he felt so sure of her constancy and firmness that he never for one instant thought there was anything to fear in that direction. And here was Mary, his own dear little brown-eyed lassie, herself writing to him that all must be at an end between them ;

talking of her self-respect, and her respect for her father's feelings, saying he must not write or speak to her, that it was utterly hopeless.

Good heavens! how could old Wellings have been so idiotic! Dolly almost laughed in the midst of his misery at the thought of the interview between his father, and the worthy Deacon; and yet it was no laughing matter; the blurred and blotted lines traced by Mary's trembling fingers were too plain evidences of her grief and anguish of mind; and Dolly's smile almost turned to tears as he read over and over again the miserable sentences. Sad as they were, and showing in every word the depth of the writer's love, and grief, they were yet determined enough, and seemed to leave no loophole for any hope to creep through. What was he to do? To leave the matter where it was was an absurd impossibility; they loved each other, and nothing should come between them for long; but what to do in the face of Mary's letter was a problem Dolly could not solve. He was not to write; she begged him earnestly over and over again not to attempt to communicate with her, to spare her the bitterness of saying again what it had caused her such anguish to write; and yet, he *could* not sit still, and go on in his daily life as if all was as it had been, and nothing had happened; he *must* be doing something; he must see his father, see Mrs. Laver, see Mary's father, and Mary herself; he would move Heaven and earth, he would *compel* the Fates to be propitious; this very day he would hasten to St. Philip's—and then he remembered the wretched races, and rushed off at once to his friend's quarters to beg him to find another rider for the redoubtable Quickset.

Shouts of welcome greeted Dolly as he ran into his friend's quarters, for that gentleman, with one or two choice spirits, was engaged in preparations for the start to the race-ground. Breakfast was over, and the drag expected every minute.

"Here you are Dolly, as fit as a fiddle. eh? Why, old man, what is the matter with you? you look ill, you're as white as a sheet! Haven't you slept? for Heaven's

sake don't lose your nerve ; here, have a small tot of brandy—set you up in a minute !”

“It's no use, I am dreadfully sorry,” said Dolly refusing the proffered refreshment, “I can't ride for you——”

“Can't ride for me !” cried the astounded owner of Quickset, “Why, Dolly, what on earth do you mean ? You don't mean to throw me over at the last minute like this ? You *can't* do it Dolly !” and his consternation was reflected on the faces of all the company.

“I—I—have had bad news from home,” stammered Dolly, in great distress at the despair depicted on his friends' faces, “I've been dreadfully upset——”

“Anything wrong with your people ? Nobody ill, I hope ?” asked his friend anxiously.

“N—n—no, not exactly that,” admitted Dolly.

“Then, old man, you *must* ride, there's pots of money on you, and you must see yourself——why, hang it all, man, we're just going to *start*. Here's the drag coming round now. You *can't* leave us all in the lurch in this way. There is, and you know it, absolutely *no* one to take your place. Good heavens ! it's *awful* ! You must be mad to think of such a thing.”

And as all the others chimed in with words to the same effect, poor Dolly was forced to give in, and own that there was indeed no help for it, and that he must ride or lose for ever the good opinion of all his comrades-in-arms.

“It looks rather dicky for Quickset,” exclaimed one of that steeplechaser's supporters gloomily, as Dolly went out. “Never thought Dolly would turn tail like that ; he looks hipped, and knocked to pieces.”

“Oh ! *he'll* be all right when he gets into the pig-skin,” said Quickset's owner cheerfully. “Old Dolly could ride in his sleep, comes natural to him ; I don't feel a bit nervous about him.”

Dolly hastened back to his quarters, for the drag was waiting for him ; and cursing the evil fortune which had fixed upon this day of all days in the year for the now detested races, he quickly penned a short telegram which

he gave to his servant with orders for its instant despatch; and taking from him the bag containing his bright-coloured jockey kit, he ran down the stairs, and was soon seated in the place of honour next the owner of the drag, and bowling away at a round pace towards the race-ground. Had it not been for Mary's miserable letter the pleasant excitement of the quick drive through a lovely country and in the bright, brisk morning air, would have given Dolly a momentary respite from the anxieties which were rapidly changing one of the cheeriest of men into a most melancholy individual; as it was, however, the chaffing sallies of his companions on the drag, and their boisterous spirits grated painfully upon his own sorrow-laden mind. He did not want to be a spoil-sport, but it was in vain that he tried to enter into the fun, he replied at random, and as they could not but see that he was cast down with some absorbing trouble, his brother officers soon left him to himself, and he gave himself up to the sad thoughts the morning's missive evolved. Nor was even the bright and animated scene the race-course presented able to distract his mind; it all seemed unreal to him; the shouts of the people, the cries of the stall-holders, the continued roar of the betting ring, all the noise and tumult of the busy, merry throng he heard indeed, but heeded not, for his thoughts were far away at St. Philip's with the pretty and adored Mary, and he longed with all his heart to be by her side, soothing her in her sorrow, drying her tears, and giving her strength and hope for the future which, in spite of everything, he was determined should be a bright and happy one for them both.

He went through all the preliminaries of the race of the day as in a dream, and it needed the most earnest entreaties of his friend to recall him to himself. As the owner of Quickset stood by his side, whilst the other horses and their riders were coming up to the starting-post, and briefly gave him some last instructions, Dolly remembered all that this race meant to so many of his comrades, and briefly replying to his friend that he was all right, and would do his best for him, he took his

place in the line, and for the moment forgot all his troubles in the excitement of the coming struggle. It required, as Dolly knew well enough, all his powers to keep the unruly brute he bestrode in subjection, and to-day Quickset seemed more intractable than ever; he appeared to have some mysterious feeling as to his rider's shaken nerves, and two or three false starts caused by Quickset's wrong-headed obstinacy, dispersed the last clouds from Dolly's brain, and made him give all his powers to the race before him. At last they were off, and Quickset in a short time forged ahead of the ruck, closely pressed by a powerful bay whose rider evidently knew well enough what he was about. The keen excitement of the contest drove everything from Dolly's head but the intense desire to beat his close-clinging rival, and Quickset entering into the spirit of the race, at length vouchsafed to behave himself, and answered nobly to his rider's calls of knee and whip and spur. On they went, sometimes neck and neck, now one, now the other, slightly drawing ahead; then slowly evened, then passed by his rival; the obstacles were one by one successfully negotiated, the big hedge and water-jump achieved; a short stretch of turf, a stiff hurdle, another stretch of turf, and the race would be over. As the two horses, Quickset and the bay, approached the last hurdle, Dolly was very slightly ahead, and doing all he knew to keep his advantage; all eyes were upon them, it was almost a neck-and-neck affair, the shouts were deafening; close together, with scarce a hair's breadth between, they took the last hurdle —when a loud cry of terror and consternation arose, for the bay rushed past the winning-post alone, and Quickset and his rider were struggling on the green turf. In a moment help was at hand, and Dolly was dragged away from the vicious brute, who was lashing out in all directions. But the ready help had come too late, the turf was reddened with the blood which flowed from a gash in Dolly's head, and he was borne, bleeding and insensible, to the tent of his comrades-in-arms.

The regimental doctor was with him almost as soon as

he was got out of the reach of Quickset's heels, but all his efforts to restore consciousness to his unfortunate patient were in vain ; he did what he could to stop the flow of blood, with such extemporised means as could be procured, and accepting the offer of an easily-hung barouche, which a county magnate generously placed at the injured man's disposal, a kind of couch was made across the carriage, and Dolly was slowly driven to his quarters in the Porton Barracks, at Lanton.

A sad enough sight, then, awaited Mr. Lamley and Alicia, as they were ushered into the quiet, darkened chamber where Dolly lay, still unconscious, his face wan and white from loss of blood, his pale lips moving, and his white hands feebly plucking at the counterpane ; the linen bands in which his head was swathed giving the while a ghastly and corpse-like look to his face. A further and careful examination of the hurt had convinced the surgeon that the injury was of a more serious nature than the cursory examination on the course had disclosed, and he was waiting with the greatest anxiety for the return to consciousness.

"It would be worse than cruel for me to disguise the truth from you, Mr. Lamley," he said, in reply to a question from Dolly's father. "Your son is dangerously hurt ; it is a most cruel blow, and I fear concussion of the brain."

"Poor fellow ! poor fellow !" said his father, his face almost as white as his son's. "There is no danger of—of—he is not going to——"

"I trust not, I hope not ; we must hope for the best, my dear Sir," said the doctor, in stereotyped phrases. "At this early stage it is impossible to presage with any certainty."

"But how did it happen ?" asked Mr. Lamley, horror-struck at the sad plight of his only son.

"I was there, and looking on the whole time ; your son, so they tell me, has been depressed—not in his usual spirits—for some time, and, indeed, this makes me the more anxious about the poor fellow ; he did not wish to ride ; I suppose he felt out of sorts, and in the morning

he tried to beg off; our fellows are terribly cut up about it, for they persuaded him against his will; everything went right till the last fence; we think he must then have lost his nerve; anyhow, the horse caught the top rail, rolled over, and began kicking viciously, and before we could get up to him, your poor son was gashed in the head with the brute's hoof."

"He will get well? He *must* get well!" cried Alicia, who had left Dolly's bedside, and silently entered the room where her father and the surgeon were conversing. But the surgeon did not wish to go through another painful cross-examination, and rejoined his patient, leaving Mr. Lamley to break to his daughter the doleful news.

Alicia refused to leave her brother's bedside, and all that night she and her father watched in vain for some sign of returning consciousness; as, however, the tardy autumn dawn penetrated through the cracks in the closed shutters, and suffused the darkened chamber with a faint grey light, Alicia thought she perceived some slight movement in the still form stretched on the narrow bed; and, whispering to her father, the two watchers drew near, as the movement became more pronounced, and Dolly woke from the state of coma into which the severe hurt he had received had thrown him. Had it not been for the large effusion of blood from the wound—so the doctor said—it was almost certain he would have lost his life; as it was, the violent shock ended in a dangerous attack of brain fever, and for many days Dolly lay there unconscious of all that went on around him; now sunk in a state of lethargy, and again talking wildly and incoherently.

It was impossible now for either Mr. Lamley or Alicia to make light of Dolly's attachment, for Mary's name was constantly on his lips, recurring again and again in the disjointed conversations he held with imaginary persons, and in the distressing whirl of unconnected thoughts to which he gave utterance.

The dreary days wore on, and still the patient continued his wild mutterings and ravings; the fever was gradually wearing out his strong vitality, and in spite of

the most careful watching and tendance, the hope that he might recover seemed daily to become fainter and fainter.

"Do you know of anything that was upon your son's mind before he met with his accident?" asked the doctor, who had heard poor Dolly's pitiful ravings, and had his own suspicions as to the cause of the depression his brother officers had marked and commented upon on his return to his duty. "Do not think I am prying into your private affairs, but the truth is the fever should have abated before now. I do not disguise from you that I am very anxious about your son; there must be some disturbing influence at work."

Now Mr. Lamley was by this time fully aware of the nature of the "disturbing influence," and though he could not blame himself in the matter, for he had not thought the volatile Dolly had been so seriously in earnest; yet he wished now with all his heart he had not been so obdurate. If Dolly would only recover—if his father could see once more the light of intelligence in those fever-bright eyes, he would—oh! how gladly—put his pride in his pocket, and let the lad marry whom he chose.

"There was, indeed, some love affair," answered Mr. Lamley, "and it was not altogether suitable. I thought, too, it was but a passing fancy, and I put a stop to it. Poor boy, he seems to have been terribly in earnest! It is painful to hear him so constantly calling for the girl. There must be something in her for Dolly to be so earnest about it. I have a good mind——"

"I think, sir, if you were to send—if we could get the young lady here, it is possible that her voice and presence might have more effect than all the soothing drugs in the pharmacopæia," said the doctor hesitatingly.

"I would not hesitate one moment if I thought that," said the anxious father. "If you felt sure——"

"We can but try, and she would surely come if she knew the danger your son is in," said the doctor.

"I will see my daughter about it at once," returned Mr. Lamley, going towards the sick-room, where Alicia

watching and tending her brother. "It is very awkward—desperately awkward," he muttered to himself, as he climbed the short flight of stairs, and thought over his unpleasant interview with Mary's grandfather, "supposing they will not let her come—or, perhaps, the girl herself will refuse to come. I had better not *write*, it is so uncertain. I will send Alicia—or perhaps Julia could—. No, by Jove!" he said at last, with a return of his emphatic utterance, "I will go myself!"

And having come to this decision, he imparted his plans to the astounded Alicia, who was herself longing to propose this very thing, but had not dared to do so—and departed at once for St. Philip's, as eager now to secure Mary's presence and loving care for his suffering boy as he had before the accident bitterly scouted the idea of any connection whatever between the two.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A WOEFUL LITTLE MAIDEN.

THE news of Dolly's accident quickly filtered through the kitchen at The Towers, and spread abroad all over St. Philip's in an incredibly short time, and bad as the news was, it lost nothing in its transit; hence, it is not at all surprising that Mary was greeted with a painfully amended edition of the sad intelligence as she entered the breakfast room on the morning after Dolly received his hurt.

"Oh, Miss, sich dreadful noos, as the milk 'ave brought this morning! That 'andsome young gent up at The Towers 'ave met with a drefful haccident, and lies dead in 'is bed, kicked to death by an 'orrid brute of an 'orse, on a race-field!" exclaimed the housemaid, who had been lingering about, waiting for her opportunity.

It must, however, in justice to the serving-maid, be said that she had no suspicion of the state of affairs between the "'andsome young gent," and her young mistress, or, as

she said afterwards, "red 'ot hirons wouldn't have drawn her lips asunder!"

As it was, she was horror-struck at the effect her news had, for Mary turned as white as the snowy table-cover beside her, and pressing her hand to her heart, she would have fallen to the ground, had not the maid rushed to her, and received her in her arms.

"It can't be true! It can't be true!" murmured Mary, as she quickly came to herself.

"What is the matter, my dear?" asked her father, coming at that minute into the room, and astounded at the sight that met his eye, "what can't be true, and why——?"

"Oh, father! I cannot tell you. It is too terrible! I must go at once to Mrs. Laver, and——" and without finishing her sentence, Mary ran from the room, leaving her father in a state of intense bewilderment, to cross-question the equally astonished maid, and to hear the dismal truth.

"Poor fellow! Poor Mary! I will send her mother to her!" And with that he, too, hastened from the room; but before he had had time to tell his wife the direful news, and to send her to console her stricken daughter, Mary was out of the house, and, dazed and bewildered at this sudden and awful stroke, was going at a quick pace towards Rozel.

Mrs. Laver was not out of her room when Mary arrived, and the poor girl waited in a state of almost frenzied impatience, while the widow hastily completed her toilette, and ran downstairs to greet Mary.

"My dear," she cried, as she quickly entered the room where Mary was, and closed the door behind her; "then you have heard? Isn't it dreadful! Poor fellow! Poor Dolly!" and she came up to Mary, who had covered her face with her hands; for her worst fears were confirmed by Mrs. Laver's words. Mary was crying quietly; the tears were coming through her fingers, as Mrs. Laver drew the poor girl towards her.

"Oh! I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it! All yesterday I was in dread lest he should come. I was going

away to-day to be away from him ; and to think that all the while he was——" she could not utter the dreadful word—"and I shall never see him again !"

"Do not say that, Mary dear !" said the widow soothingly ; "while there is life there is hope——"

"Life !" cried Mary in an altered voice, taking her hands from her face, and gazing at Mrs. Laver with wide-open, tear-blurred eyes. "Life ! They told me he was dead !" and she grasped Mrs. Laver so tightly by the arm in her excitement as to cause that tender personage to wince.

"Dead ! No ! How could such a report ?——but of course everything is exaggerated here. He is hurt, my dear, dangerously hurt, and Mr. Lamley and Alicia are gone to him ; but I hope many years——" and here she was interrupted by the sudden entrance of Mary's mother, who, out of breath with the unwonted exertion, and terribly excited to boot, took no notice whatever of Mrs. Laver, but ran to her daughter, and enfolding her in a capacious embrace, she murmured soothing terms of endearment and consolation, utterly oblivious of everything for the moment but that her darling child was in the greatest grief, and in strong need of comfort.

The sudden change from the awful certainty which had overwhelmed Mary, to the new hopes Mrs. Laver's words brought, was too much for her at first, and she could not answer her mother's fond efforts at consolation. It was Mrs. Laver who informed the agitated dame that her daughter's lover was still alive, and great was Mrs. Waddell's relief and joy at the news. The telegram Dolly had sent off before hastening to join his friends in their drive to the race-course had been addressed to Mary, and had contained the short message, "Received your letter, will be with you to-morrow." It may well be imagined what a commotion this message stirred up in the house of Waddell. Mary had never in her life received a telegram before, and the message being brought into the breakfast-room where she and her father and mother were sitting at their morning's meal, there was no possibility of her concealing it from them,

even if she had wished to do so. A look of keen vexation had come into the Mayor's face as he read the message, which Mary handed to him without a word, and passed it on to his wife.

"This almost amounts to persecution," he said angrily. "Of course, you cannot see him, the thing is impossible, and I am glad you see things in a proper light, Mary." For Mrs. Waddell had not been able to keep her news to herself; she had been boiling over with indignation at the treatment her father had received at Mr. Lamley's hands, and at the insult his opposition gave to Mary, and to the whole family. Mr. Waddell had soon perceived that there was something on his wife's mind, and a little judicious pumping had quickly brought that something to the surface, and made him master of the whole story, which he received with great wrath and indignation. The Mayor thoroughly agreed in the course his daughter had taken, and though he had judged it better not to say anything to Mary on the painful subject as yet, at the same time he was grateful to her for putting an end to a state of affairs he had all along disliked, and which was becoming so irksome to him as to be almost unendurable. This telegram, then, seemed likely to upset everything, and bring matters back again to their old uncomfortable state of uncertainty; so the Mayor determined to put his foot down once for all, and to take good care that his mandate was obeyed.

"It is intolerable," he had continued, nervously twitching at the tablecloth, and furtively regarding his daughter to see the effect his words should have upon her, "it is unbearable; of course, as I said, you can't see him; the best thing you can do is to go away at once, and when the young man comes, I must give him plainly to understand that the whole affair, which ought never to have been begun, is at an end, and that he *must* take no for his answer."

"I think your father is right, Mary dear," chimed in Mrs. Waddell, "you can write to your aunt at Kensington, and go off there to-morrow morning early, eh, my dear?"

"It is hard, going away just now, mother dear," said Mary dolefully, "but I see no other way; I could not bear to see him, and to hear all he——" and the ready tears choked down her sentence, as she rose to make preparations for her departure on the morrow.

But the morrow, as we have seen, brought the sad news of Dolly's accident, and though Mr. Waddell still wished his daughter to abide by the arrangement proposed, Mary steadily refused to leave St. Philip's, where she could have constant news of Dolly; and her mother took her part. So the Mayor was over-ruled, a telegram was sent to London announcing the change of plans, and Mary stayed at home awaiting, with anxious heart, such news as Mrs. Laver could give her from time to time as to Dolly's condition.

Mrs. Laver heard each day from Mr. Lamley, and though, for Mary's sake she made the best of things she could not disguise from the girl the fact that her lover was in a position of great danger; and as the days wore on, and there was no change for the better, and as Mr. Lamley's letters became more and more despairing, his correspondent felt it was cruel to buoy Mary up with false hopes, and she made up her mind to the unpleasant task of preparing the poor girl for the worst.

It was on the day on which, urged by the doctor, Mr. Lamley had determined to put his pride in his pocket, and himself to ask Mary to come to his son's bedside; and Mary, as was now her daily custom, had hastened over to Rozel to hear what news the morning's post had brought.

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Laver in answer to Mary's question, "I have heard from Mr. Lamley"; and here she paused, and looked apprehensively at Mary, for the task she had before her was not a pleasant one, and Mrs. Laver was struck with sorrow at the worn and weary look, Mary's anxiety and sleepless nights had given her. "Come here, Mary," she said at last; and as Mary drew near Mrs. Laver made way for her on the sofa on which she was seated, and drew the girl close to her, "I am afraid, Mary dear," she went on hesitatingly "I am afraid, my dear——"

"Oh, Mrs. Laver!" cried Mary starting up. "he is not gone? do not tell me that!"

"My dear little maid," said Mrs. Laver soothingly, and drawing Mary to her again, "he is indeed alive—but—I have had bad news to-day; his poor father is in the greatest distress, and despair; they fear the worst, and hard though it is to have to tell you this, I think it is the kindest thing I can do——"

"If I could only see him," said Mary strangely calm, as Mrs. Laver thought, "if I could only see him, I could bear it, oh! so much more easily—but it is hard, hard when I love him so—for him to—to go from me, and never a good-bye said——"

"And why should you *not* see him?" cried the widow briskly. "I am sure Mr. Lamley would not refuse; he could not—nay, I am certain, he *would* not be so heartless; and of course, it would comfort you, my poor little Mary, and poor Dolly may perhaps come to himself before he—and he will *want* to see you. I wonder I never thought of this before; why did you not speak to me, Mary? I will write at once to Lanton, and we will go down there together to-morrow; and I will never forgive Mr. Lamley if he is angry; he cannot be so hard."

And with that the impetuous little woman ran over to her davenport, and speedily indited an epistle to her future husband announcing her and Mary's arrival for the morrow. But Mr. Lamley himself was on his way to St. Philip's to beg of Mary the very favour the widow was asking him for her.

Mary's gratitude to Mrs. Laver was almost painful to that good-natured, worldly-minded, and yet kind-hearted little body, and she packed her out of the house, cutting short Mary's thankful words, under the pretence of preparing for the morrow's journey.

Mrs. Laver and Mary reckoned without their host, however, in this plan of theirs, and this Mary found on her return home, for her father very steadfastly refused to give his consent to his daughter's journey to Lanton, a refusal in which he was supported by his father-in-law,

Mr. Wellings, whose soul burned within his bosom as he recalled the unpleasant incidents of his attempt at mediation with Mr. Lamley.

"What!" he exclaimed, for he was in conference with his daughter and his son-in-law, as Mary came in—"what? I never heard tell of such a thing! To go and force yourself upon the parties at such a time! It ain't decent, Mary, nor it ain't what I should 'ave expected of you; not but what I ain't sorry for the pore young man, as nice a young gentleman as ever I set eyes on."

"Yes, your grandfather is quite right, Mary," said her father. "I could never give my consent to such a thing, and I am astonished at your proposing it."

"You must abide by what your father and grandfather say, Mary," chimed in Mrs. Waddell, "not but what it is hard, I am free to confess, and him lying there at death's door, poor dear," and Mrs. Waddell wiped her eyes, as the sadness of the whole affair presented itself to her mind.

"I must do as you all say," said Mary, in a tone of grievous disappointment. "I thought there would be no harm in trying to see him before——"

But she could not finish her sentence, and hastily left the room, to go and tell Mrs. Laver that the fiat had gone forth, and that her hopes of seeing her lover before death should snatch him away were done away with before the force of Mr. Waddell's pride and Mr. Welling's resentment.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. LAMLEY PUTS HIS PRIDE IN HIS POCKET.

WHEN Mary opened the house-door on her dismal errand, she found Maud Berrington on the steps and just reaching up her hand to ring the door bell.

"Miss Berrington!" exclaimed Mary astonished to see her friend there, for there was a social gulf between High

Street, and St. Philip's Park, and a visit from the daughter of that society potentate—alas! now fallen grievously from her high estate—the Honourable Mrs. Berrington, was the last thing Mary looked for, in spite of the pleasant terms of friendship the two girls were upon.

“My dear Mary,” said Maud, “I am so very sorry for you, my dear; I have been wanting to come to you every day since I heard of Mr. Lamley's sad accident, but I have been in such trouble, I have not been able to come; and I have just heard how *very* ill he is, so I came at once to tell you how truly I sympathise with you, dear.”

Trouble seemed somehow to agree with Maud Berrington for she had entirely lost the worn and weary look which had provoked Mary's pity and confidence when the two girls had met on the Parade, and though her face was sad, and her voice attuned to sympathy with her friend's trial, Mary, even in the midst of her misery was struck with beneficent change in Maud's appearance.

“It is good of you to think of me,” said Mary, “but come in, if you will do so; my errand can wait, and I have much to tell you,” and with that Mary led the way to her own special sanctum.

“You are looking very ill, Mary,” said Maud when they were alone together in the dainty chamber, which was furnished as a bedroom, and a sitting-room, “but, indeed, you must have suffered tortures of anxiety. I ought to have come before——”

“It is so kind of you to come at all,” said Mary, “if I could only see him! but they will not let me go, and he is dying—oh! it is more than I can bear——”

“My poor dear little Mary, do not give way; if it be God's will, he may yet recover,” said Maud, going over to her friend, and kissing her affectionately, and trying to soothe her. But the disappointment had been more than Mary could endure, and it was some time before the storm of grief subsided into plaintive little sobs.

“It is so selfish of me to think only of my own sorrow, when I know you have weary troubles to bear, too,” said Mary at last.

"Then you have heard——?" asked Maud, wondering how Mary could have heard of the misfortunes Lord Wrenford's financial *fiasco* had brought upon the denizens of Woodville, "but it is all altered now," she added, a flush of colour suffusing her handsome face, "and thanks to you, too, partly, Mary dear."

"All altered—thanks to me!"——exclaimed Mary in great bewilderment, for she had heard nothing of the news with which St. Philip's was soon to ring, and which was to afford Major Pilton and his friends much conversational pabulum.

"Then you do not know? you have not heard?" asked Maud

"I have heard nothing," said Mary, in some curiosity, in spite of her absorbing sorrow.

"Oh! we have been in such trouble, Mary; my poor mother has been in such terrible distress; though, I must own, for my part, I felt a certain relief—but you know nothing—nearly all our income was taken away from us, and we were preparing to leave St. Philip's; of course, I should not have gone without seeing you, Mary; I had already been carefully reading advertisements in the papers to see if I could find something to do; and two days after we heard the news of our loss I met Charles—Mr. Coleson, I mean."

"I know it all now," exclaimed Mary, kissing her blushing friend, and pressing her hand, "he has told you what I said!"

"Yes, and he is so good, and Mrs. Coleson has been so kind; the relief of it all, and the suddenness—it scarcely seems real. I can hardly even now believe it to be true!"

"But you have not told me how it all happened," said Mary, forgetting her trouble for the moment at her friend's news.

"I had gone into the district to say good-bye to some of my old friends among the poor folk there, and as I was coming away, feeling very sad and sorrowful at the thought of leaving everything and everybody, Charles caught me up, and—well, I told him we must leave

St. Philip's, and he seemed so sorry, and I suppose I looked sorry too, for, before I could think, he had told me what you said he wanted to tell me, Mary ; and then I told him how poor we were, and that I would not be a burden to him——"

"A burden!" exclaimed Mary, "why, Dolly said he worships the very ground you tread on," and Mary sighed as, at the thought of Dolly, the memory of her sorrow came back to her with renewed force.

"I shall always be grateful to you, and to him, and so will Charles, for if it had not been for you two, he would still have thought I was going to marry Lord Livermoor, and I should have gone away, and never, perhaps, have seen him again."

"Well, but how did it all end?" asked Mary, as Maud gratefully pressed her hand.

"He said he had enough and to spare, and that it was nonsense to talk of burdens ; and then he told me such things as would make me appear ridiculously conceited to repeat."

"He did not say more than the truth," said Mary with a sad smile, as the memory of Poor Dolly's eager wooing came over her.

"And then he told me he had already spoken to mother, and she had begged him to say nothing to me because his uncle is—it is too absurd!—but——"

"Oh! I think I know what you mean," said Mary, half smiling—and who did not know the much-lauded panacea?

"Yes, it was the Pill," continued Maud, with a laugh, "as if I cared for that! Well, the end of it was, he made me take him to mother ; and she has been so terribly crushed down with our misfortunes, that I suppose even the nephew of the obnoxious Pill seems better than the workhouse, for that is the cheerful abode she has assigned to us ever since we heard of our loss, for she received Charles quite nicely ; and when he was gone she told me how good he had been to her, and how sorry she was that she had been so rude to him—though *he* did not tell me of this—and I made her tell me what she had said to him. He

must be an angel to forgive her ! At any rate he is heaping coals of fire upon my poor mother's head, for he is behaving most generously to her."

"And when are you to be married?" asked Mary ; "and where shall you live? Shall you stay on here? Will Mrs. Coleson live with you? And what will Mrs. Berrington do?"

"What a host of questions, Mary," laughed Maud. "I will try to answer them categorically. Isn't that a splendid word? First of all, we shall be married *soon* ; next, we shall stay on here till Mr. Argle gets the living he is always talking about, when Charles has been promised St. Philip's; next Mrs. Coleson will live with us—she is so nice, and I saw Charles wanted it, and I begged her to do so; and Charles is going to take Woodville, and mother talks of Bath or Cheltenham."

"Well, I congratulate you with all my heart," said Mary, as, after a short period, chiefly filled up by a monody in praise of the fortunate curate on Maud's part, with Mary as chorus, Maud rose to take her departure.

"Mother is calling me," cried Mary, as they went down the stairs together. "I ought to go and tell Mrs. Laver——"

Here Mrs. Waddell appeared, in such a state of excitement that she scarcely saw Maud, who nodded to her friend and passed out of the house.

"Wherever have you been, Mary?" cried her mother, "you'll never believe me, and I can't hardly believe my own eyes and ears; here's Mr. Lamley, poor Dolly's father, in the drawing-room along with your father and your grandfather, asking for you, and wanting you to come down to Lanton and save his son's life. Goodness me, Mary, you're as white as a sheet! I ought to have broke it to you, my dear. Oh! if it would only come all right at last! The poor gentleman is quite downcast and heart-broken; but come along, my dear; they are all waiting for you," and she hurried the astounded girl into the presence of the Sanhedrim assembled in the Mayor's parlour.

Probably Mr. Lamley never felt so uncomfortable and ill-at-ease in his life as he felt when the door of the Mayor of St. Philip's parlour closed behind him, and he found himself in the presence of the two individuals he had grievously insulted—Mr. Wellings, and the father of Mary Waddell, to wit; for if he had not hurled at the latter-named person the verbal thunderbolts with which he had driven the well-intentioned Mr. Wellings from his house, he had no doubt but that that justly-incensed individual had disclosed the reception his overtures had met with to his son-in-law, and that he—as was the case, indeed—bitterly resented the insults that had been heaped upon the old man. Moreover, the remembrance of the cause of Mr. Lamley's loud-voiced indignation on the memorable occasion of the worthy upholsterer's visit to The Towers, brought anything but balm to his agitated feelings as he journeyed to St. Philip's-on-the-Sea on his melancholy errand to Mary and to Mary's parents. Nothing but the extremity of peril in which his son was lying, and the forlorn hope that Mary's presence by his bedside might bring to Dolly the chance of recovery which no skill or care seemed to afford, nothing but his deep anxiety on Dolly's account would have given him the moral courage to swallow the meal of humble-pie at which his gorge now rose so uncomfortably. Nor was the small amount of self-possession these unpleasant thoughts left him increased at his finding himself face to face with the man he had driven from his doors with the most opprobrious epithets. Mr. Lamley had some well-defined fears as to whether he would be permitted an interview with the father of the girl he had treated with such scorn, and thinking that Mr. Waddell might very naturally refuse to see him, or speak to him, he had followed the maid to the door of the room, and had entered the parlour almost as his name was announced.

"Mr. Lamley!" cried the Mayor, as that gentleman entered with, it must be confessed, a very false appearance of self-possession. "This—this intrusion, Sir, is unpardonable, after the insults——"

"Yes, Sir," interrupted Mr. Wellings, all his anger

stirred at the sight of his foe, "you did ought to be ashamed of yourself a-coming 'ere, after the way as you went on! Worse than any Turk! worse than any Turk!"

"I beg you will hear me," said Mr. Lamley in much confusion at the reception he was meeting with. "I was wrong to speak to you as I did," this to Mr. Wellings, who only vouchsafed him a snort of anger, "but when you know my reason for coming here, I am sure you will pardon the intrusion. My son is dying——" and here Mr. Lamley was fain to pause and gulp down the obstruction in his throat which the painful truth thus plainly put in his own words caused him.

"Ah, pore young man," said the tender-hearted Mr. Wellings, "and truly sorry I was to hear it, for a more pleasant-spoken young gentleman I never come across. Cut off in the very flower of his youth, as one might say."

"It is a grievous trial to you, Mr. Lamley, and I am truly sorry for the sad news, but I do not see——" and Mr. Waddell paused and looked at Mr. Lamley.

"It rests with you, Mr. Waddell, to give me a hope as to my poor son's recovery, which only you and your daughter can afford, and I beg you, a father yourself, to—to pardon the past, and not to deny me this last chance."

"Oh! Reginald, for our dear Mary's sake, do what the gentleman wants," cried Mrs. Waddell, who had entered the room unperceived by Mr. Lamley, who was still standing, and with his back to the door. "I am sure, Sir, *anything* that we can do, we will do, for that dear young man," she added, as Mr. Lamley turned to see who this new ally might be.

"Ah! Mrs. Waddell?" he said, and he grasped her hand. "You will plead for me; the poor lad lies unconscious, he has never recognised anyone since he met with his terrible hurt, and day and night he calls upon your daughter's name——"

"There, Waddell! you 'ear *that*?" cried the impetuous Mr. Wellings, "calls upon her name, and she, poor dear,

a-eating her heart out with grief! I declare it's worse than them ungodly plays as Sidney is so fond of," and Mr. Wellings brought the yellow bandana into requisition and wiped his eyes, as he thought of the dismal state his little grand-daughter's love affair had come to.

"I am sure, Mr. Lamley," said the Mayor, himself much moved at the doleful picture Mr. Lamley's words conjured up, "I am sure that anything I can do——"

"Then you will not refuse?" cried Mr. Lamley eagerly, "you will let your daughter come back with me?"

"Of course he will," cried old Mr. Wellings in much excitement, "he ain't a stone; she shall see the young man before the Lord takes him; 'tis what her pore heart 'ave been aching for ever since he was took."

"Ah! and that is true," said Mrs. Waddell, who was moved to tears also. "'If I could only see him,' 'If I could only say good-bye,' she keeps on, and she is worn to a shadder of herself, poor dear, it makes my heart bleed to see her—it does. Do sit down, Mr. Lamley, for we can't bear malice in such circumstances as these."

"So far as I'm concerned, I shan't think nothing of what's past and gone, and 'ere's my 'and on it," said Mr. Wellings, going up to Mr. Lamley and wringing his hand.

And Mr. Lamley found himself, and that in the most natural way in the world, and without being in the least astonished at the odd turn things had taken, seated in familiar conclave, and discussing his son's sad case, with the last people of all others he should have imagined such a discussion to have been possible with, only a few days ago.

"There is just a hope, a faint hope I fear, but still a hope that your daughter's presence may give the poor boy a chance of his life. The doctor tells me there is some trouble on his mind, and from his constantly calling, and muttering about Mary, he thinks it is just possible that if she were by him, her presence, the tone of her voice might soothe him, and perhaps abate the fever which is gradually sapping at his life."

"She shall go, Mr. Lamley, she shall go at once," said the Mayor. "Louisa, my dear, go and call Mary."

"I must tell you, Sir," he said to Mr. Lamley, as his wife went off on her errand to Mary, "that all this between your poor son and my daughter has been most galling to me; I was taken by surprise, and I regret I permitted any semblance of——"

"It was my fault, Waddell; it was my fault, Sir," interrupted Mr. Wellings, "I persuaded my son-in-law, he was most wishful to put an end to it; but the young folks seemed so fond of each other, and the pore young fellow spoke up so noble. Well, I thought you'd come round, and that's the long and the short of it."

Mr. Lamley felt considerable embarrassment at the introduction of this delicate topic, and scarcely knew how to reply to these explanations.

"If the poor lad only recovers, there shall be no opposition on my part," he was beginning, when Mary and her mother came into the room.

Mr. Lamley scarcely recognised in the woe-begone little figure before him the pretty maiden whose appearance had met his commendation when he had seen her at Mrs. Laver's, and his heart was touched at the evident marks of her sorrow for his son Dolly.

"Cheer up, Mary, my dear," said old Mr. Wellings, as his grand-daughter came forward to respond to Mr. Lamley's greeting, "'ere's the poor young man's father a-asking of you the very thing you are pining for."

"You will not refuse me, I am sure," said Mr. Lamley, keeping Mary's hand in his, and looking at her earnestly, "he is always speaking of you, poor fellow; it is a forlorn hope, but your presence may do good."

"I would give my life for his," said Mary, with a catch in her breath, "and if you, father——"

"I am quite willing for you to go, my child," said Mr. Waddell, in reply to Mary's look, "and I hope and pray your son may yet recover," he added to Mr. Lamley.

"My train starts in two hours time; perhaps you would return with me," said Mr. Lamley hesitatingly.

"Well, then, my dear," said Mrs. Waddell, bustling out of the room, "there is no time to be lost; I know you will excuse us, Mr. Lamley."

"I have much to do, and little time to do it in," said Mr. Lamley rising, "I will call here for you in two hours time," and with that he shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Waddell, and Mr. Wellings, and thanking Mr. Waddell for his kindness, he hastily departed to Rozel, to see the astonished Mrs. Laver, and to tell her all that had happened.

CHAPTER XXX.

AND THE LAST.

MARY was very nervous at the thought of the *tête-à-tête* journey with the terrible Mr. Lamley, for though Dolly had tried to make light of his father's opposition, he had not been able to hide from Mary the fact that he stood in some awe of his father. Moreover, Mr. Wellings' graphic description of his reception at The Towers had given her a high idea of her travelling companion's temper and powers of vituperation.

"You needn't be afraid, my dear," said her mother, to whom, in the course of the packing operations, she had confided her fear, "if ever there was a gentleman Dolly's father is one, and though he might have been a little 'igh and 'aughty with your poor grandpa, it is all knocked out of him now, and he is as mild as mild; I declare it makes my heart bleed to see him so 'umble and sorrowful."

Mrs. Waddell was quite right in her remarks, and as Mary travelled down to Lanton Mr. Lamley's care for her comfort, and anxiety that she should not be fatigued, soon took away all the awe she had at first felt, and as they journeyed on together the two became quite intimate.

It is not to be supposed that Mr. Lamley, in spite of the dread anxiety which prompted his advances to the Waddell faction, found it an easy operation thus to give up all his cherished ideas of a fine match for his hand-

some son, and to accept the inevitable in the shape of the pretty little person in front of him in the railway carriage; for the clipped vernacular, the absence of the aspirate in Mr. Wellings, and the want of polish in Mary's parents, had grated on his feelings to a painful degree; and, had it not been for the extreme urgency of the case, he would have regretted the consent to which his action had committed him should Dolly recover. And this in spite of Mrs. Laver's praises of Mary. "After all," she had said when her harassed *fiancé* had poured out his troubles into her attentive ears before going to call for Mary, "after all, she is a dear little thing, and quite able to hold her own in society, and should poor Dolly recover, as I hope and pray he may, and marry her, as, of course, he must now, he needn't marry all her relations nor will he live in St. Philip's." "That is all very well, Julia," Mr. Lamley had returned, "but *we* shall live here, and I confess I have no relish for the society of my future daughter-in-law's people; it is not a pleasant prospect."

"There are other places in the world besides St. Philip's"; said Mrs. Laver, "and I confess I should not be sorry to leave a place I am beginning to be tired of." And with this broad hint as to her wishes, and a way out of the difficulty, the subject dropped.

But if Mr. Lamley shuddered at the thought of Mary's relatives, and hailed with pleasure his Julia's solution of the social difficulty, he soon agreed in that lady's estimate of the girl herself; and as her reserve thawed under the influence of her companion's kind care of her and his efforts to divert her mind from the sad errand they were upon, he was astonished at the quiet common sense, and the varied stores of information which her conversation disclosed; and he acknowledged to himself that apart from social considerations, this was the very girl he would have himself chosen as the helpmate of the volatile, and extravagant Dolly. And so it came about, that by the time they arrived at their journey's end Mr. Lamley had considerably altered his ideas as to his son's choice, and was bent on showing Mary how pleased he

was with her ; a result the shrewd little maiden was not slow to perceive, and to hail with delight.

It was already dark when their train drew up at the Lanton station, whence they quickly drove to the barracks where Dolly was lying. Alicia was expecting them, and hastened, as the fly drove up, to greet Mary.

"It is so good of you to come," she said shaking hands with Mary, "if I had only known how much he loves you, I would have tried to be friends with you ; he is my only brother and—and it is so hard to lose him," and Alicia who was overwrought with anxiety and watching, brushed away the tears from her eyes as she spoke.

"He often spoke of you and always so kindly, and so admiringly, I have longed to know you," said Mary, "oh ! I hope he is no worse."

"He cannot be worse unless—" and Alicia could not finish the sentence ; "he is worn out with this dreadful fever ; I must warn you of the terrible change in him. But you are tired, and of course you are longing to see him" ; and with that Alicia led Mary to her chamber, one of the rooms which had been given up to the stricken family. Dolly was indeed changed ; and in the fever-burnt, emaciated figure restlessly moving, and muttering incoherently, Mary could scarcely recognise her gay and gallant lover of yore ; and a terrible pang wrung her heart, as she knelt by his bedside, forgetful of everything but her grief, and tried to choke down the sobs that *would* come, as she held and gently stroked the poor thin hands.

Somehow the touch of Mary's fingers seemed to soothe him, and he lay still for a few moments ; but soon the feverish restlessness held him again, and as he moved in his unquiet bed, he began to talk with a pitiful incoherency of the poor girl who was kneeling beside him.

"I am here, Dolly," she said at last, in a tone of anguish. "Oh ! if you could only know that I am by you."

As the low sweet tones reached his ears, poor Dolly stopped in his restless movements, and seemed to listen for more.

"Go on speaking to him," whispered Alicia, who, with her father, was anxiously watching the effect of the meeting.

"Dolly," said Mary, softly, "it is I, Mary, don't you know me, Dolly?" she asked, with the same subdued yet agonised cry, as she rose and bent over him, and kissed his feverish lips.

"Yes, it is Mary, how came——" and Dolly half rose in the bed, and tried to put his arm round her neck. But the effort was too much for his strength, and he fell back insensible.

At first Mary thought he was dead, and, unable to speak, she gazed at her lover's form with wide-open, horror-struck eyes.

"I have killed him!" she cried at last.

"Hush!" cried Alicia, as she and her father quickly came forward, "he is breathing; he knew you. Oh, father! if he should yet recover!"

But Mr. Lamley had hastily quitted the sick-room in search of the doctor, with whom he quickly returned, and who soon removed their fears, and expressed the keenest delight at the success of his experiment.

"He will soon come round," he said, "but he is terribly weak, poor fellow; he must not speak; he must sleep, and I will——"

Just then Dolly's eyes opened and met Mary's anxious gaze, with the blessed look of full consciousness.

"Mary!" he whispered, for he was almost too weak to speak, "then it *was* you?"

"Hush! Dolly," said Mary, "you must not speak, dear; I will not leave you; close your eyes, and try and sleep," and as she smoothed his forehead with her cool hands, Dolly gave a sigh of content, and, obeying her, was soon in a deep, refreshing slumber.

All through the long night Mary watched by her lover's bedside, and for the most part alone with him (for Alicia was glad of the respite Mary's presence gave her), and many and earnest were the petitions she put up that the dear life might yet be spared to her.

Her heartfelt prayers were answered; for the morrow

found Dolly, frail and weak it is true, and the very shadow of himself, but with the fever gone, and with his mind his own once more.

The relief and joy of Dolly's father and sister at the miracle wrought by Mary's voice and touch were reflected in the earnest gratitude they felt towards her ; while the close companionship of the narrow quarters, and the common object of their prolonged stay there, brought about an intimacy which almost astonished Mary when she thought about it.

It was some weeks before Dolly was strong enough to be moved from Lanton, and, during the latter part of his son's slow return to health, Mr. Lamley was frequently away at St. Philip's, basking in the smiles of Mrs. Laver, and preparing for the move from The Towers which the widow had stipulated should take place before the months of her widowhood should be up, and the decent interval between her late husband's death, and her new nuptials tidied over.

As Dolly gradually recovered strength, he became more and more exacting of Mary's company ; he was as astounded as delighted at the pleasant turn in his love affairs which his accident had brought about, and made her tell him over and over again of all that was said and done while he was lying helpless, and wandering in his mind.

One of the first letters Dolly wrote was addressed to his friend Charles Coleson, congratulating him upon the fortunate issue of *his* love affair as reported to Dolly by Mary ; and in return he received a congratulatory epistle from the elated curate, in the course of which Coleson asked his friend—should he be well enough—to act as best man for him on the auspicious occasion of his marriage with the beauteous Maud.

Of course, the events at Woodville were fruitful topics for much gossip among the St. Philip's folk ; the Major was quite in his element, and he and Mrs. Laver stood up stoutly for Maud and her curate against the sneers of Mrs. Modbury, who was delighted at the chance this *mésalliance*—as she called it—gave her of girding at Lucinda.

"Such a dreadful come-down, don't you know," she went about saying, "from Lord Livermoor to a curate; and then there's the Pill! Well, I do pity poor Lucinda!" and the limp Mrs. Archer, who agreed with everybody, shook her head, and sighed dolefully, while Mrs. Argle could hardly find it in her heart to forgive Maud for so foolishly preferring her own ideas as to connubial bliss to the glories of a place in the Peerage.

Mrs. Berrington, however, was able to bear up under all these trials, for if Charles Coleson was "only a curate," he was exempt from the poverty usually associated with that expression; and if it was impossible to deny his connection with the obnoxious Pill, the proprietor of that article had amassed a large fortune by its sale, and had, moreover, come forward in such a superlatively handsome way, on the news of his nephew's engagement being conveyed to him, as enabled that nephew to provide in the most ample manner for his mother-in-law's comfort.

Besides, she was to leave St. Philip's on her daughter's return from her honeymoon, and in the city of Bath the honourable prefix to her name, together with her comfortable income, would assure her a favourable reception, and a full enjoyment of the social privileges her soul loved.

The fact that Dolly Lamley was to be best man was a sad blow to Major Pilton, and great was his discontent when Mrs. Coleson apprised him of the fact.

"I did think, Madame," he said, "that the Bishop would have asked *me* to be his best man; next door neighbours, too; but don't tell his lordship."

"Eh? what is the secret to be kept from me?" asked Coleson, who had caught the Major's last words as he entered the drawing-room at The Pines, "and why that portentous sigh, Major?"

"I shouldn't have said anything, Bishop," replied the Major, "but I confess I *should* have liked to be best man."

"Why, man, and who is to give away the bride then?" said Coleson, with a laugh.

"Ah! thought you wouldn't slight the old Major,"

said Major Pilton, cheering up ; "and 'pon my word, when I come to think of it, I *am* more in the heavy father's style, eh ? ' Bless you, my children ! ' and all that sort of thing," and the Major chuckled with delight to think that his friendly claims were not to be slighted after all.

And a fine sight it was on the auspicious day, to see the Major attired in a brand-new frock coat, holding the glossiest of top hats in his hand, with a huge white satin favour pinned on his breast, and his rubicund visage screwed up in solemn puckers to express his due appreciation of the importance of his office. Mr. Argle was so startled at the Major's loud and deep "*I do*," with which he responded to the question as to "Who giveth away this woman to be married to this man ?" that he almost dropped the Prayer Book ; and an audible and most unseemly titter from the overflowing congregation greeted the Major's response, which was, indeed, more in the tone of a word of command than of an utterance in a church. And beautiful to behold, too, were the airs of paternal solicitude with which he took Maud into his charge, entirely cutting out the venerable Mr. Frank Coleson, who was also present at his nephew's wedding, and whose gentlemanly appearance, and old world courtesy made a most favourable impression upon Mrs. Berrington upon whom he bestowed the best part of his attentions. Though still bearing evident marks of his long illness, Dolly was able to stand by his friend Coleson in this important crisis of his life, while Mary was not the least pretty of the fair bevy of bridesmaids who supported Maud.

And soon after Coleson returned to the scene of his duties, as Benedick the married man, St. Philip's was stirred to its depths by another scene which took place in the parish church of St. Philip's, where the Reverend Charles Coleson joined together in holy matrimony Adolphus Lamley and his brown-haired little bride, Mary, the daughter of that eminent auctioneer, Mr. Waddell, the worthy Mayor of St. Philip's. By Mary's special desire the wedding was a very quiet affair ; her

brother Sydney in gorgeous attire officiating as best man, and Alicia—already serving her noviciate in St. Ethelburga's House of Mercy—the only bridesmaid.

Mr. Wellings' speech at the breakfast brought tears into his daughter's—Mrs. Waddell's—eyes, causing Mr. Lamley, on the contrary, a thrill of delight, not by the eloquence of its lengthy periods, and the extraordinary inventiveness of its illustrations, but at the thought that this was his—Mr. Lamley's—last appearance in St. Philip's society, and that his approaching marriage with Mrs. Laver—who was, of course, present at her little friend's marriage—and settlement in London would relieve him from the uncongenial society of his new daughter's relatives.

Mr. Wellings, however, as Mr. Lamley was forced to confess, was in other respects a model grandfather, for he settled upon Mary such a sum as relieved the young couple from all money worries, and enabled them to live in comfort and even luxury.

Before very long, too, the desire of Mr. Argle's heart was satisfied, and he and his wife and their numerous progeny were transferred to the wealthy benefice for which the poor man's mouth had been watering for many a long year, leaving the curate, with his wife and his mother, in quiet possession of the Vicarage of St. Philip's-on-the-Sea, greatly to the content of the St. Philip's folks.

GEORGE LAMBERT.

Macbeth.

THE tragedy of Macbeth, the efflorescence of Shakspear's ripened genius, has a perennial interest for the student of history or of literature. Standing in the old chronicles, on the dim borderland between myth and fact, where supernatural agencies ravel the tangled skein of human destiny, the ruthless usurper is a fascinating study. Nor is the dramatic personality, hovering between historical realisation and poetic conception, one whit less entrancing. No tragic scene in our troubled Scottish story is more vividly realised than that cold-blooded slaughter of the gentle Duncan. While even Bannockburn's fateful fight, surcharged with such momentous issues to the nation, shows no clearer against the background of antiquity than that hostile force advancing, under cover of Birnam's moving woods, to wreak its vengeance on the royal tyrant, now at bay.

The theme was suffused with dramatic interest even before it reached Shakspear's hands, but it gained in subjectivity, in intensity, and in point by his masterly treatment. A glance at the development of the story, from its first appearance in the national records till it assumed its present unity of purpose and brilliance of presentment, furnishes a graphic illustration of the evolution of history.

The historic Macbeth first appears in John of Fordun's Chronicle, written in 1385; as we know, by concurrent testimony, that he reigned between 1040 and 1056, a period of over three centuries separates the narrator from the events he records. What revolutions in thought, in feeling, in social arrangements, in national custom, this gap implies may be made evident by comparing the Victorian with the Elizabethan era; and into what obscurity

the lives of even the most exalted may sink, during such a lapse of years, is witnessed by the controversies still raging around the unfortunate Mary, Queen of Scots. Fordun, compared with later chroniclers, is both a cautious and conscientious writer, yet, even he, glamourised by the charm of genealogy, has been led astray into the enumeration of impossible dynasties. The modern conception of history, as an exact and painstaking reproduction of facts, was utterly foreign to these old writers. Taking the Latin classics as their models, they seem, generally, to have preferred the diffuseness and beauty of Virgil's epic to the terse and nervous prose of Cæsar's commentaries. Fordun's account of Macbeth's accession and reign is really the germ of the story which grew and flourished, in congenial soil, for two centuries ere it took fixed shape as the masterpiece of the greatest figure in our literature. Yet how many of the details, that have provided excitement to generations of playgoers, are utterly absent from the old chronicle! Fordun explicitly excludes that idea of Macbeth's near kinship to the royal stock which was urged by later writers as an adequate explanation of the crime. He states that Duncan was murdered through the wickedness of a family that had cut off both his father and grandfather, that he owed his death to his temerity in venturing into a disaffected district after repeated warnings, that he was fatally wounded by Macbeth, the head of this family of regicides, at Bothgofnane—now translated, a smithy or smith's house—died at Elgin and was buried at Iona.

He recounts the flight of Malcolm Canmore to Cumbria and of Donald Bane to the Isles, notes the growth of an adverse faction in the country which favoured Malcolm's recall, and the king's energy in its suppression.

Macduff, Thane of Fife, at once the most active and powerful partisan of the legitimate heir, according to modern ideas of succession, is at length marked for destruction, escapes to England, is despoiled of his possessions and condemned to perpetual exile. The nobles demur at the arbitrary sentence, pronounced in violation of the traditions of all Celtic rule, as an infringe-

ment on their position and privileges. Then follow a long account of the mission of Macduff to Malcolm and of the tests that cautious youth applied to discover the sincerity of the Thane, and a short narrative of the punitive expedition. Macduff enters Scotland in advance to raise the standard of rebellion, while Malcolm collects an army, under the patronage of Edward the Confessor, in Northumbria. Deserted by his thanes Macbeth is compelled to fall back on his patrimonial district in the north, but, being hotly pursued, is overtaken at Lunphanan in Aberdeen and killed in a skirmish on December 5th, 1056. This is the substance of Fordun's original account, graphic in its straightforward simplicity, credible in its natural sequence of events. There are several notable deviations from the popular tale, the omission of all reference to the interposition of the supernatural being perhaps the most striking. Duncan falls, as did his ancestors, by the hand of an assassin, who promptly mounts the throne over his dead body—a practice too common, in those rude times, to excite comment. The motive of the crime is obvious to the historian, it needs no supernatural suggestion. Then the faithful fellow-soldier Banquo, whose secret murder adds so black a stain to the character of the later Macbeth, is absent. Strangest of all, there is no mention of the central figure in the Shakspearian tragedy—Lady Macbeth. Ambitious men, in those days of internecine war and fierce race hatred, required no female instigation to the darkest crimes.

The next writer who relates the story is Androw, of Wyntoun, prior of St. Serfs, Loch Leven, a poet or rhyming chronicler almost contemporary with Fordun. He wrote about 1420. As poets are still wont, he incorporated many traditions into his "*Orygynale Cronykil*." His version of the crime and its consequences is therefore fuller and more sensational than Fordun's. Duncan is murdered in Elgin by "*Makbeth-Fynlak his systyr sowne*." The idea of the foul deed originated in a dream, where three women, whom the dreamer thought to be weird sisters, flit across his perturbed mental vision, giving

him, in substance, the "all hails" that set his ambitious soul on fire. Wyntoun, however, expressly adds, either in refutation of current fables or in strange anticipation of future variations :

"All this he herd in his dremyng."

Macbeth is then represented as taking Dame Grwok—more euphoniously, Lady Macbeth, widow of the murdered Duncan—

"And held hyr bathe hys wyff and qweyne."

Once firmly seated upon the throne, the usurper, if he were an usurper, ruled with justice and equity ; during his reign the country prospered materially and morally ; evil-doers were restrained, poverty relieved. He granted concessions to the church, the only humanising influence in the land, and is even reported, perhaps erroneously, to have undertaken a pilgrimage to Rome for spiritual and charitable objects. He projected a great fort on the hill of Dunsinane, in Gowrie, exacting, what in later days would be termed, statute labour in its construction. It is in connection with this onerous work, for the hill is over 1000 feet high, that Macduff incurred the King's displeasure. He escapes to England, and returns with an army, as described in Fordun's chronicle. The circumstance that Macbeth, incensed at the flight, reduced the Thane's stronghold, appears, Lady Macduff even holds parley with the angry and disappointed King, but there is no suggestion of that barbarous murder of mother and children, which would have shocked even the brutal fourteenth century. According to Fordun, Macduff escapes by sea, evidently from the Firth of Tay, in a badly victualled craft ; Wyntoun makes him flee by land to his castle on the northern shore of the Forth, and cross that estuary into Cumbria at a place still called, in commemoration of the fact, Earl's Ferry.

The worthy prior here interrupts his thrilling narrative of bloodshed and vengeance to state that the proper fare across the Forth at Earl's Ferry is four pennies, advising no one to pay more for being "frauchtyd owre that sè." It is a fine pawky touch, redolent of the soil. Wyntoun relates that the invading army marched to Birnam, where

they heard of Macbeth's superstitious dread of a moving wood, hence each soldier designedly carried a branch to simulate the prodigy. Macbeth flees to Lunphanan, pursued by the Thane of Fife, and, at the final rencounter, declares that his death can never be compassed by man of woman born. The Thane satisfies his scruples in this respect, and slays him in single combat. Thus the groundwork of supernatural suggestion has been added to the tale, though distinctly recognised as subjective and peculiar to Macbeth, a man more under the influence of religious impressions than his compeers. Lady Macbeth is also incidentally here ; but her relationship to both kings is so completely different from the traditional one that it was impossible to place her in the bad pre-eminence she was destined to occupy in a later age. Banquo, with his spectral line of kingly descendants, is yet unknown.

The next historian, or romancer, who undertook the history of Scotland was the learned Hector Boece, Professor of Divinity and first Principal of King's College, Aberdeen. Before his appointment as head of the new college, in 1494, he occupied a Chair of Philosophy in a French University, so he seemed well qualified by learning and by wide experience of human life for a task which his patriotism converted into a labour of love. Yet this was the writer who distorted and confused our history by weaving the wildest myths and veriest folk-lore into its texture.

His great reputation as a scholar gave to his work an influence its merits never justified. It is a romance of history, like Scott's "*Ivanhoe*" or "*Talisman*," masquerading under false pretences, for the writer not only invents his facts, but forges or feigns authorities to support them. The book, written in Latin about 1526, was received with such acclamation that a rhyming and a prose translation were made by Royal command. The former, by an unknown writer named Stewart, after existing in MS. since about 1531, has recently issued under authority of the Master of the Rolls. It is a prolix work, of no poetic merit, extending to some 70,000 lines. The translation into Scottish prose, made in 1533 by John

Bellenden, Archdean of Moray, is the classic. This was in turn translated into English to form a volume of Hollinshed's histories.

A Rev. William Harrison collaborated with Hollinshed, himself a clergyman, but he retires into oblivion before the work is half accomplished, declaring that he will spend no more labour on "anie historicall matters," as they are utterly condemned as vain, savouring of negligence and heathenish impiety.

Hollinshed's work brought the story within twenty-five years of the date of Shakspear's composition, and directly under his notice.

This group of writers may be considered together, for they all professed to translate Boece's History, and although they deviate considerably both from the text and from each other, so far as the story of Macbeth is concerned, the variations are immaterial. The comparison of Bellenden and Hollinshed is only interesting as casting side-lights upon the modes of thought and manner of expression peculiar to the two countries at the close of the sixteenth century. In Boece's History, the weird sisters, whom Wyntoun had suggested as the fantasy of a dream, appear in bodily shape to Banquo and Macbeth journeying towards Forres. In the English version, the thanes met "in the midst of a laund three women in strange and wild apparell resembling creatures of elder world"; in the Scottish, they met "be the gait thre wemen clothit in elrage and uncouth weid. Thay wer jugit be the pepill to be weird sisters." The genius to realise a supernatural situation by awesome accessories is awaiting, otherwise the history anticipates the drama in detail. The second appeal by Macbeth to supernatural prescience is peculiar to the play, where a situation so effective in dramatic presentation bears repetition, but the equivocal sentences of the weird sisters appear also in the history.

Banquo occupies an even larger place in the romance than in the play; but this is probably due to the dramatist selecting the tragic incidents only, or to the exigencies of stage-mounting, which required the exploits of the thanes

to be epitomised by hurried messengers, or to Shakspear discountenancing that fulsome adulation of the Stuart dynasty characteristic of the period. Hollinshed out-herctors even Hector Boece, who had flattered the Scottish kings by endowing their mythical ancestor with all the virtues, for he makes a long digression from his text to connect the coming monarch with Banquo. But what specially distinguishes the Tragedy from the History is the magnificent creation of Lady Macbeth, a character unsurpassed in literature, displaying, in the flow of fortune, intense concentration of purpose and fierce heroism, in its ebb smothering an agonised wail of blasted hopes in tears of blood.

The historical or romance foundation of the character in Hollinshed is brief and prosaic. This is the only reference speaking of Macbeth's design to seize the crown,—the writer says: "the words of the three weird sisters also greatly encouraged him thereunto, but specially his wife lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as she was very ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to bear the name of queen." The parallel passage in Bellenden is more discursive: "His wife impacient of lang tary, as all wemen ar, specially quhare thay ar desirus of ony purpos, gaif him gret artation to perseu the third weird, that scho micht be ane quene; calland him aftimes febil cownt and nocht desirus of hounouris; sen he durst not assailye the thing with manheid and curage quhilk is offerit to him be benivolence of fortoun." "Makbeth," he adds, "be persuasion of his wife gaderit his friendis to ane counsall at Innernes," where the regicide is concocted and executed. Upon such a bald foundation Shakspear reared his splendid conception of a woman whose genius penetrated to the inmost thought of her ambitious husband, whose devotion shrank from no sacrifice in consummating his design. She dashes aside his simulated scruples, his weak reliance on weirds, his phantom daggers and ghosts, with proud disdain. Yet underneath the royal robe, worn with such queenly dignity, there beats a genuine woman's heart; she never forfeits sympathy in her hour of triumph nor respect in her fall.

Shakspear had seen the last proud Tudor, her escutcheon stained with the noblest blood of the land, pass from the awful loneliness of the throne without pity or regret. Lineaments of the great queen have been recognised in this queen of tragedy, but Lady Macbeth is no portrait, she rather embodies and sums up a type of womanhood where indomitable energy is only surpassed by superb irresponsibility.

There is another notable History, written by a distinguished contemporary of Shakspear—George Buchanan—in which the story of Macbeth is related. This work was issuing from the press in 1581, twenty years before the play was written, but whether it ever came under Shakspear's notice is doubtful. Buchanan's reputation rests on his classic Latin style rather than on his historical acumen. Had his research and nerve in history been at all commensurate with his learning and boldness in polemics, Scotland would have blessed his memory. But instead of discarding the fictions that obscured the records of his country, he carefully ferried them across the tumult of the Reformation. Dealing with Macbeth's supernatural suggestion he oscillates between the dream hypothesis and the visible witch theory. He states that Macbeth, on account of Duncan's pusillanimity, "cherished secretly the hope of seizing the throne, in which he is said to have been confirmed by a dream. On a certain night three women appeared to him of more than human stature." And again, "He first wreaked his unbounded rage on Banquo, his accomplice in the treason, instigated, as is reported, by the prophecy of some witches, who predicted that Banquo's posterity would enjoy the kingdom." Buchanan dismisses Lady Macbeth in a sentence, as follows: "His mind, already sufficiently ardent of itself, was daily excited by the importunities of his wife, who was the confidant of all his designs."

On the accession of James to the throne of Great Britain, patricians, professors, and poets vied with each other in the heartiness of their congratulations. When James first visited Oxford in 1605, an original masque was contrived for his delectation.

In this three students, dressed like weird sisters, but in reality representing the three countries of the United Kingdom, met him and in some Latin verses of welcome alluded to his descent from Banquo. This allusion greatly pleased the king, and the lines were subsequently tacked on to a tragedy performed during this visit. Shakspear may have witnessed the play, or at least, heard of the literary conceit that so gratified the monarch. Thus, it has been suggested, he was sent to Hollinshed, where he found material to construct a great tragedy that would not only delight his royal master, but exercise his genius on a variant of the engrossing subject he had already essayed, with such ability and success, in Hamlet.

Some later Scottish historians have been at pains to whitewash the character of Macbeth. It is maintained that under the old law of succession, that law made notorious by the pleadings of Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrick, Macbeth was wronged by the formal recognition of Malcolm Canmore as heir to the throne, that he had therefore a legitimate cause of quarrel, and that Duncan merited the fate that overtook him. Even so clear a thinker as Buchanan scouts the idea of primogeniture, preferring the succession of collaterals to that of inexperienced youths in the direct line. That some such law existed appears evident from the frequency of brothers succeeding to the throne, but the difficulty of its application was abundantly manifested in the countless wars of succession that harassed the country. Fordun, as we have seen, knows nothing of Macbeth's cousinship to Duncan, nor can his explicit statement that Malcolm II., Duncan's grandfather, was killed at Glamis by Macbeth's ancestors, who were descendants of former kings, be got over. Others maintain that Gruoch, or Lady Macbeth, was a grand-daughter of Kenneth, who was slain by Malcolm II., and consequently the legitimate heir to the throne, but this is a tradition descending outside the current of the older historical writings. In Campbell's "Caledonia" her relationship to Duncan is exhibited in a genealogical table. Malcolm I. had two sons; from the

elder Gruoch is third in direct succession, while toward the younger Duncan is similarly related.

Kinship to the royal stock, in days of continual usurpation, was too general a qualification for practical purposes. Macbeth, like the kings he succeeded, ruled as long as his faction held the ultimate right of might. Whenever his friends were seduced by higher bribes, or alienated by his rigorous enforcement of law, his cause was lost.

Banquo, who appeared in Boece's pages to flatter the Stuart kings, is a pure fiction ; all his valiant vindication of royal authority in far Lochabar and his association with Macbeth in clearing the country of Danes, Kernes, and Gallowegians are without historical foundation.

But the tragic story in its fictitious form has been indelibly impressed on English literature by the fire of genius, and no amount of historical research will ever dislodge it. Macbeth, the heroic defender of his country's liberties, successfully assailed, at the very zenith of his career, by the terrible temptation of a crown, feebly attempting to shake off the spell, then plunging headlong, ignominiously, from his high estate of honoured manhood to the abasement of cruelty, tyranny, and remorse, is a tragic picture that will endure while the language lasts.

Then, there is the pathos of a strong man struggling in the inexorable grip of destiny, whose deep-dyed villainies exact a fearful retribution, whose mental agony is evidenced by phantoms projected into objective visual reality, whose senses, instead of reflecting external facts, are reverted to the raging tumult of his soul, and thought becomes visible in a blood-stained dagger, and audible in that hopeless cry—

“‘Sleep no more : Macbeth shall sleep no more.’”

A. S. NELSON.

Line-fishing in the Solway Firth.

WHILE some kinds of sport have become unattainable, save by those who have wealth at their command, one modest branch of it remains open to all whose place of residence enables them to take advantage of it.

Many sportsmen will doubtless be inclined to sneer at the idea that sea-fishing should be dubbed a "sport" at all; but the writer conceives that its title to be so classed depends in a great measure upon the method in which it is pursued, and upon what each individual's idea of what constitutes true sport may happen to be.

One great charm sea-fishing undoubtedly possesses in that it is open to all without let or hindrance—without the alternative of asking permission to pursue it, or paying heavily for the privilege.

The day of which it is proposed to give a brief account fell in the beginning of September, and as the party, of whom the writer was one, meant business, an early start was effected.

What a glorious sail it is from the good old Burgh of Kirkcudbright to the fishing-ground at and off the mouth of the River Dee! The banks of the river are, for the most part, clothed with wood down to the very water's edge, and the greenery continues to flourish almost to the verge of the open sea, although the trees diminish in size as the mouth of the river is approached.

Mounting guard over the estuary of the Dee is the picturesque little island known as the "Little Ross," crowned with a handsome lighthouse.

The best fishing-ground lies partly outside the island in question, and partly in the narrow sound which separates it from that part of the mainland called the "Muckle Ross."

The party consisted of a young clergyman and two "limbs of the law," of whom the present writer was one.

The crew numbered two fishermen and a boy, the two latter being invaluable for handling the rather repulsive-looking bait.

The views of the party as to what they intended and expected to catch may be summed-up in the word "anything," and the equipment was correspondingly various.

The bait consisted of the familiar and indispensable lug-worm, and a supply of india-rubber spinning eels. These last are a cleanly and most deadly lure.

There were also two stout rods equipped with strong hair line, double salmon-casts, and white-winged flies, scarlet or yellow bodied, and embellished with silver gimp.

Here the writer takes the opportunity of stating his opinion that it is a mistake to think, as many persons appear to do, that any kind of lines and bait, no matter how coarse and unattractive, will answer for sea-fishing. Sea-fish may not perhaps be possessed of very delicate appetites, yet it is the writer's experience that the boat furnished with the neatest tackle (provided it be sufficiently strong) invariably secures the best sport and heaviest catch.

The fishermen also placed in the boat a few creels for lobster and crab fishing. By-the-way, how comes it that the lobster prefers a fresh, and the crab a stinking, bait? Such, as far as the writer's experience goes, is the fact.

And now the creels are dropped along shore between Torr's Point and Balmae House, the picturesque residence of the Countess of Selkirk, and this duty accomplished, the next proceeding is to lay down the long lines. This operation is not quite so simple and easy as might be supposed. In fact, it is an art only to be acquired by long practice.

Let any unwary and inexperienced amateur try his "prentice hand" at it, and the chances are that he will very speedily get the line into a state of hopeless tangle and very probably a hook into some part of his own person.

The long lines being properly shot, the boat is pulled back within the river mouth, and the hand-lines for flounder fishing are produced. These are equipped with triangles made of old umbrella wires, from each point of which hangs a hook upon a short gut snood, baited with lug-worm.

For the first quarter of an hour nothing is done, but then the sport begins. "Sand-dabs" and "spotties" are both on the feed, and for the best part of an hour it is "wind up," "wind up," all round. Then there comes a lull, the fish having evidently gone off in search of pastures new.

Suddenly there comes a tremendous tug upon one of the writer's hand lines. "What's this?" is the shout, "I have hooked a whale!"

"Gie him line, gie him line, man!" says one of our fishermen quietly, "it'll only be a bit skate," and gets the gaff ready. And the man of experience is right, it appears, as the catch is slowly brought to the surface. The process is rather a tedious one, as the fish is heavy and strong, and the slight tackle would not hold him for a moment were he subjected to rough usage.

Presently, he comes into view, looking through the clear water rather like a derelict hearth-rug. He is handled as if he were loved, and carefully steered within reach of the watchful boatman's arm, when the gaff is into him in a moment, and after a short sharp struggle there is in the boat a really fine specimen of the thorn-back skate (*raia clavata*).

He proves himself no pleasant neighbour, as, doubling his long tail over his face (and a mortally ugly phiz, it is) he lashes about him furiously.

Quiet is, however, soon restored by one of the men striking the fish sharply with the handle of the gaff at the point of junction of the formidable tail with the body. This apparently causes instant and complete paralysis, as the fish is quiescent from that moment.

A few minutes later the parson has a fine spotted flounder, and then a couple of dozen of sand-dabs come to hand in quick succession.

As soon as the shoal has passed it is time to examine the lobster creels and long lines. The former are taken up first, and without the expectation of much of a catch as both the time of the day and the state of the weather are unpropitious.

In fact, the first two creels are blank, although the bait in one of them has been torn.

Number three, however, contains a fairly large male lobster with only one great claw. Number four has two females or "hens" and a small male, which last is returned to his native element. Numbers five and six are empty, but number seven contains a fine large crab. Number eight has a large male lobster with good claws. Number nine has two, a male and a female. Number ten is blank, but numbers eleven and twelve each contain a good-sized female, so that the total catch amounts to eight lobsters and one crab—quite as good a result as the boatmen expected.

A hearty lunch having been eaten, the smokers "light up," and the next proceeding is to examine the long lines.

A rather disappointing start is made, for at least a dozen hooks come in blank, although the bait has been cleverly stripped from almost every one of them. Then comes a rock-cod of about three pounds, followed by half-a-dozen smaller ones.

Next come a number of blanks, followed by a few more cod and a flounder nearly four pounds in weight. Then follows a large eel—not a very usual catch to be made so close in to shore and in daylight.

Another cod of nearly six pounds, three or four smaller ones, and a plaice exhaust the catch.

It should be mentioned that as the lines are raised the hooks are carefully re-baited and the lines re-set as the boat moves slowly along.

As evening is now drawing on, two lines equipped with the artificial spinning eels are put out astern, while the writer begins to cast with rod and line and the usual white-winged fly.

Slowly and steadily the boatmen pull along the

shore and not far from it. Suddenly the Parson shouts, "Here he is!" and proceeds to get one of the stern lines.

This is an operation that requires some care, for on the one hand it will not do to handle the line roughly, lest the hook be jerked out of the fish's mouth—nor on the other hand must the line be allowed to become slack even for a moment, for then the fish, if a heavy one, would break away with a rush.

The reverend gentleman, however, understands his business, and in a few seconds a good lythe (pollack) comes into the boat.

In another minute there is a good rise at the writer's fly, and at the next cast the music of the reel shows that something is hooked.

It is no lythe this time, as the fish bores persistently down among the sea-weed. The lythe never does this, but rushes about close to the surface.

The fish turns out to be a rock-cod, and gives some trouble before he is finally brought within reach of the fatal gaff, when he is found to be a little over four pounds in weight.

As the sun sets and it begins to grow dusk, all hands have a lively time of it, and before long there are over a score of cod and lythe in the boat. Finally, the long lines are taken up for the second time, and nineteen fish—cod for the most part—are found upon them.

By the way, one great nuisance in long-line fishing is the number of star-fish. Few people, looking at the innocent-seeming *Asteridae*, would easily believe what voracious creatures they really are.

Stripping hooks of the bait is easy work for creatures which can, and habitually do, fasten upon an unfortunate mussel or oyster, and suck out and devour the unhappy bivalve in spite of his shell.

And now for home, under the silver moon. The sail is, indeed, a thing to be remembered.

The Chaplain's pure tenor voice is heard to great advantage over the rippling tide as he trolls forth the auld Scotch songs he sings so well; and one of the party

who has recently visited Australia tells of his experience of sport in that distant land.

Apart from sport, however, he seems not much in love with either country or people, for his summing-up of Australia is "Gum-trees, dust, mosquitoes, and corn-stalk impudence."

And so home at last. The number and variety of the catch leave little ground for complaint, and after the various households are supplied, the fishermen have still a fair quantity for their own use.

Finally, it may be said that the cost of such an expedition is not ruinous. The total expenses of the party, including hire of boat, gathering of bait, and men's wages, amount to exactly twenty-five shillings, the unanimous opinion of the party being, "a good day's sport, and not dear at the money."

Its Own Reward.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest ?
May I take your hand in mine ?
Mere friends are we—well, friends the merest
Keep much that I resign.

R. BROWNING.

"GHASTLY crush, isn't it? Dancing is quite impossible, so let's sit out. Besides, I want to talk to you. It's ages since we had one of our own special talks. You don't want to dance, do you?"

"Want to? No. It's a relief to rest and talk to someone who understands things. I'm tired of making conversation."

"You don't seem tired. I was watching you this afternoon at the races. You looked so brilliant, so untirable. But you are a little changed, too."

"I am a year older," she said.

"A whole year, is it?" he said lazily. "It doesn't seem so to me at this moment. The old room, and the old waltz, and the same people, too, mostly." He looked passed her, down the draped and Chinese-lantern-hung verandah. "And I'm glad to be back, though I've grumbled so often at the old life. There's a fascination and brilliancy about India that clings. I was happy enough at home, but I too 'heard the East a-calling' and I wasn't sorry to come."

"For a few months more—six, isn't it? before you go back, and—I haven't congratulated you!"

His eyes went to her face, then looked away.

"You were not surprised?"

"No, your letter prepared me. Perhaps I should have written you my congratulations when the announcement did come, but these things are better spoken—between friends."

"And I kept my promise," he said, "you remember?"

"Yes, you kept it. It was good of you," she said thoughtfully.

The memory of the circumstances under which the promise had been given clutched at her heart even yet. It was one evening when they were driving, an evening in the rains. She remembered the soft damp dusk, and the pale sky with the last gleam of the sunset dying down in the west; the line of the narrow road before them, and the mist over the rice fields below. It all came back, so clear—so clear! She could almost feel the rush of the wind round her ears, and the splash of the stray raindrops that had wetted her face like tears.

They had talked of the possibility of his marriage in the future.

"And I shall be the first, the very first to know?" she had said. "Promise me that you will tell me yourself."

"Of course I will. It is due to our very perfect friendship that I should."

And presently he broke the pause that followed to say:

"No one ever has been—ever will be the friend to me that you are!"

But there was passion in the voice that was not consistent with the friendship it professed, and it found its culmination a month or two later in a dimly lit verandah at a dance, and a man saying recklessly:

"Platonic friendship? There isn't such a thing—there never was. We have deceived ourselves and—you are the only perfect woman in the world!"

After that there came troublous times for her. The loss of a friendship in which, though the Platonic element had never been very sound, there had, at least, been no evil, and a very perfect comradeship had left a void in her life. Perhaps in her heart also. But her very weakness and timidity kept her strong. The spirit of adventure that might have led another woman into encouragement, was lacking in her. She did not trust herself sufficiently.

A silence fell between them. He broke it by lifting her fan from her knee, and opening it.

"It's a pretty thing," he said, "new?"

"Yes, my husband gave it to me."

"Ah! You like white feather fans. You always had one."

"You are very observant."

"I notice many things. For one, I never saw you in a black dress before. Also, you have changed your fashion of hair-dressing. Parted in the middle, and drawn low on your temples."

"Yes, do you like it?"

"Let me consider. It is odd, and yet attractive. Taken in conjunction with your black and white gown, your eyes, and a certain expression that I see on your mouth sometimes it is—*bizarre*. You give the impression of striving to look demure and not quite succeeding. But it is distinctive."

"So I was told."

"By whom?"

"Mrs. Jasper. You remember her?"

"Yes, I met her last year. She is an interesting woman, I think, and I know you are fond of her. But she was a little severe to me."

"I wish you knew her better," she said, "she *is* interesting, and she is never conventional. I can talk to her without fear of being misunderstood."

"I know—Between women that sort of friendship seems to be rare. Think; two women who discuss life, not fashions."

"Please don't be flippant. The best of men can never quite judge women. God knows that few women are what they seem on the surface. It is probable that to my acquaintances I am simply a chatty young woman, whose high spirits occasionally develop into frivolity."

"Possibly, but I cannot judge, never having looked at you from that point of view. From the first we were more than mere acquaintances. Dear old days! What irresponsible young beings we were, and what delicious nonsense we talked. How fresh you were, and how *blasé* I thought I was. Is it only six years ago? Would you like to be nineteen again?"

"No."

She spoke sharply.

"I know. I know," he said, with quick comprehension, and then slowly, and with apparent irrelevance :

"Sometimes I wish that you were more like other women."

"The women who talk fashions? Comfort yourself. I talk fashions often."

"Who is flippant now? I mean the women who marry without love, and tell their friends that the love 'came afterwards.' I wonder if they understand the nature of the confession they make. But they are the happy women."

"If you count that happiness—yes," she said.

"I think that, in this life, we've got to count anything happiness that isn't actual *un*happiness. The supremity of either is rare, and does not last very long. Ah, there is the barn dance beginning, but you mustn't go. Sit back here in the shadow, and your partner won't find you. Have you read 'The Master?'"

"Of course. It's delightful. I knew you thought so, too."

And then they roamed into their old common ground of books. There were the publications of a whole year awaiting discussion, and plays that he had seen and she had read of and hoped to see. When she bade him good-night there was a gentle content in her eyes that had not been there for months. She drove swiftly home through the mist and sharp cold of the small hours without feeling it. She even forgot to scream when the horse shied at a shadow on the moonlit road. Her wide eyes saw intangible things and her mouth smiled softly.

She was happy, with the unreasoning, almost childish happiness that comes occasionally to even the most worldly minded of women. And this kind of spiritual emotion comes almost exclusively to women. It recognises no past, and no future, and lives but a short space of time. But it is sweet while it lasts.

When she woke next morning much of the previous evening's exaltation had died away, but she dressed

herself very carefully, and coiled her soft brown hair into its most becoming knot, smiling at herself in the glass as she did so. Her eyes were wide and bright, and there was a faint colour in her face, but she took a towel and rubbed each cheek softly till the tinge deepened. But when she was dressed, and took her last look into the glass, the smile died suddenly off her mouth, and her eyes had a pained look.

"I have no right," she thought, "no right—no right at all." She was not even very sure what she meant, but a sense of something lost came to her.

Ashton called in the afternoon, but her drawing-room was crowded with other visitors, and she only exchanged a few words with him. Looking across at him she noted that he looked very well, better for his change to England. Possibly happiness had something to do with it. She found herself wondering if he were happy, and how much his engagement meant to him. She felt restless and nervous, and the prospect of the ball this evening, where she would assuredly meet him, brought her no satisfaction.

"I am tired to-night," she said to her partner, just before her dance with Ashton, "I should like some coffee."

At the refreshment table they met Ashton, who forestalled the attentive youth, and handed her a cup.

"Sugar?" he asked carelessly, "I forget."

"Yes. Two lumps, please, and more milk than that." She pressed her lips together so that they should not shake. It was so small a matter, but his forgetfulness, and his careless acknowledgement of it, hurt her terribly. Just because one of her most vivid remembrances was of an evening when they two, alone, had drunk their after-dinner coffee out of doors in the soft luminous darkness of an Indian night. A long drive had rendered her utterly unable for the least physical or mental effort; she had just lounged there, silently, content, while he waited on her, holding her saucer, and laughing at the unfashionable quantity of sugar she requested. Ah! the soft languor of that evening. He might have remembered.

And yet it was so natural that he—that any man—should forget. There had been nothing in their past to render his forgetfulness a matter of actual cruelty. She had no definite claim to minute remembrance. Perhaps if things had been different——

“My dance, please,” said Ashton.

She took his arm without glancing at him, and they went into the ballroom.

“I don’t know why I thought you changed last night,” he said. “You are looking very well to-night in your pink dress. I like it better than the black one.”

“You have seen it before,” she said. “You used to notice dresses so much ; but you have forgotten.”

She hated her words when they had left her lips ; they implied a reproach, and reproach is so easy—so open to all. She went on talking to cover it up ; quickly and almost recklessly. After waltzing a few minutes she said suddenly,

“Oh, stop! do stop! I’m so tired. I danced too much last night, I suppose.”

They stopped in a doorway, and he looked at her intently.

“I think you are tired,” he said. “You are not talking to me to-night as you did last night—as you did last year—but as you talk to the world. It is very pretty and very nice, but I want my friend again.”

“I think,” she said deliberately, “that for the future, I shall talk to you as I do to the world.” Her fingers closed on the programme that was tied to her fan, and dragged it from its cord.

“I don’t understand,” he said quietly.

“And I hate explanations,” she answered.

Turning, she went out through the doorway into the verandah, and sat down on a couch that faced the door. He followed, and stood beside her, looking at the circling couples in the room.

“Dolly,” he said at last, “what is the matter?”

“Nothing,” petulantly.

He sat down beside her. She knew he looked at her, but she did not turn her head.

"Have I hurt you?" he said very low. "We are friends, but something is missing and wrong. Is it my fault?"

She turned her face to his now.

"Not yours," she said.

And then their eyes met. They did not speak. Words would have eased the pain, but words were useless between these two. They sat, silent, with the glare of the lamps on their faces. But he looked into her eyes, and they told the truth, and the veil between them dropped.

And at last they spoke to each other as dying people might when the necessity for concealment of thought exists no longer, in the face of the great darkness.

"Oh, Dolly!" he caught his breath a little. "Why——"

"I was afraid," she said, so low, that he scarcely heard.

"Of me?"

"Of myself more." She paused. "I thought, at first, we might be friends still. But I know now that we can't be. I was so happy last evening, but I wish that we had not met again. Do you understand?"

"Ah, dear, when did I fail to understand you?"

"It's hard, dear, isn't it?" he added, after a silence. "Do you blame me?—think I could have helped things at all?"

"No." Very calmly.

"I loved you. You know it. I told you then, and you——?"

"Hush!"

"Remember it always, Dolly."

She had no strength to speak of forgetfulness now. Life and love had come to her, and she had turned away afraid. Afraid of the possibilities—of the probable after sting. Her hour had come near to her, and she had let it pass, and the reason that had then seemed to her adequate had crumbled to dust now. Remorse? The sting of her regret was sharper than that of remorse could have been.

"It's over," she said; "over and done with—our beautiful friendship," she gave a little sobbing laugh, "and all it was to be. I was so proud of being your confidante; I believe I had some foolish idea that to you I was beyond and above the others—the women you made love to. It amused me to see you, and to know that in the end you would come to me. You said I rested you. You did not make love to me openly, but how much of your friendship was real, I wonder? You were making love to me all the time under it all."

"Dolly!" He was pale, and his mouth looked stern. "Dear," he said earnestly, "what are you thinking of me? I swear to you it was real—real as the love that came afterwards. And that was the worst and the best kind of love, because it was born of friendship. I'm not going to pretend that I'm anything that I'm not. I cared long before I said so. You don't know how often I wanted to kiss you and didn't, because I knew you would think I placed you among the other women. I knew that you were a thinking woman, and it frightened me. But I've wished since——"

"Oh, no!" in a frightened breath.

"Yes. I wish I had kissed you long before, and let you think what you pleased. I waited too long. You might have thought me a brute, but—you'd—have—cared," he said slowly.

And she was quite silent.

The music of the next waltz began—a swinging, languorous air from the new opera. She rose, and they walked down the verandah.

"Is this the end?" he said.

"Yes, the real end. We shall meet to-morrow; shall talk, possibly dance together again; but this—say good-bye to me!" she said quickly.

Women cling to their farewells, and the realisation of their emotions tempers the sorrow of parting. But men are different. And there was so little to be said; he could only look down at the pale face framed in demurely parted hair, and say very low—

"Ah! Dolly, dear, God knows I'm sorry."

And then they turned into the ball-room.

Later, when she was in her own room, she sent her ayah away, and sat down before her glass, resting her elbows on the table, and her chin on her hands. Presently a wave of colour came into her face, and she dropped it forward into her hands.

"Oh!" she moaned, as if in pain; and then—"I thought I was being so good," she said. "I didn't think I'd be sorry. And he—he would have remembered."

KATHLEEN MURRAY.

"The Gift of Life."

THERE had not been room for much doubt as to whom he came to see when he accepted the invitation to run down from town for a few days or longer.

Ivy Fane and he had had a previous acquaintance, in which they had attained to a certain degree of intimacy, consequent upon the various meetings provided by a London season. Such advantages as he had thereby acquired he had, apparently, not been slow to follow up now that he found himself under the same roof with her.

Her attitude with regard to him was not quite so obvious. Some said she despised him for certain things she had heard concerning him. Others, that the cool and indifferent air was but assumed—a cloak for warmer feelings which she had not at present sufficient grounds for displaying.

She was alone in the big drawing-room, the rest of the party having adjourned to the billiard-room. She could hear the faint click of the balls, and the murmur of laughter and voices, mingling with that dim surging sound far away on the shore.

With her hands clasped loosely in her lap, she sat gazing into the heart of the fire. For half an hour or so she never betrayed by a movement—unless her regular breathing could count for such—that she was other than a lay figure. The shaded lamp from behind shone upon the pale amber colour of her satin gown, softening and emphasising the graceful lines of her slight figure, and throwing deep shadows where the folds fell.

A tall man, pushing open a glass door softly, entered the room, and stood a moment unperceived, looking down at her before striding up to the fireplace.

"All alone? Why aren't you playing 'Fives' with the

others? I left them hard at it, thinking perhaps I should find you here."

"I wasn't in the mood for games to-night. I think I have been feeling a little bored all the evening."

Her chin was resting in her palm, her elbow on her knee, her eyes still fixed upon the glow of the coals, so that she did not observe the lifting of the eyebrows, nor the sudden compression of the well-cut, though almost lipless, mouth of the man, as he crossed one ankle over the other, and leant against the marble mantelpiece, before answering, meaningly—

"I took you in to dinner!"

His voice was peculiar to himself; he could influence people immensely by it, though he was not aware of the fact. His manner was quiet and self-possessed.

"Yes. I have not forgotten, but it struck me that you were not so amusing as usual."

He shifted the position of his feet, and crossed them the other way.

"Is it permitted to your sex alone to confess to fits of boredom?"

A faint colour tinged her cheeks.

"It is permitted to no gentleman—in society—to be rude!"

He moved a step, and flung his long, slim figure down beside her on the old-fashioned square sofa with its high back. There was a short pause, during which she remained in her old position, while his quick eyes were running up and down her almost unconsciously as thoughts went through his mind. The eyes and the brain are so closely connected that it must be when eyes move fast in that mechanical restless manner that the thoughts behind them are working fast also. It was not always that he understood her. But her unreasonable words of a moment ago seemed to point to some occasion of offence—other than that of the immediate present—with which he must have unconsciously provided her. He was searching his memory for what it could be.

Though she had not altered her position she knew that his eyes were upon her. She noted a familiar trick he had

of slipping his two long thin hands, palms together, between his crossed legs. She noticed also the high arch of his well-proportioned foot, and vaguely told herself that if heredity counted for aught in such things, there should be a long line of ancestors behind him to account for its beauty, and yet she somehow felt certain, little as she knew of him, that this was not so in his case, and wondered indifferently why people of the world, herself among the number, attach so much importance to such considerations.

As though divining her thoughts, he said, suddenly, "A penny for your thoughts! Stay—what if I interpret them for you? They are of no value, you say? Suppose I tell you that they are—to me." The last words spoken very gently. He paused, as though to mark what effect they had upon her.

"Well?" somewhat defiantly, sitting up and looking at him as she spoke.

His full gaze dropped to the star at her breast, and the heavy lashes swept, with a peculiar trick of movement, his pale cheeks. You are thinking that I am not altogether of your world—of your people," he went on calmly, showing by no sign that he was speaking of that which was distasteful to him, but rather, giving her a sense of having laid herself open to a reproach. "Should you like to know who—what my people are? for, I suppose, with such as you, friendships do not often count for much until that is clear."

She coloured slightly again. "No, not particularly," she said, "I am not of a curious nature."

His quick-moving eyes flashed restlessly up and down, the only indication he gave of resenting her indifferent air, and words. "Do you not care, then, about 'family,' as it is called?"

She laughed. "Oh, yes—how do you mean? Of course one cares, how can one help it? But one is not curious—about everyone."

"No. I see! It is of no importance who some people are. And you and I are only acquaintances, after all."

Critically, in the coolness born of her anger, she took in the quiet aspect of him.

There was the anxious line between the great restless eyes. The smooth, mouse-coloured hair, which gave a certain youthful appearance, counteracted by the lines on his forehead and the drawn look of his cheeks. It was an eager face, and one that could only belong to a man who could be very hard, very cruel, at a pinch. Again that night the boyishness of the pointed thin face touched a tender chord somewhere in her consciousness, as it always did. But she decided that the marks of struggle to be traced in the young face, ageing its youth, were not caused by any hurt to the affections, but only by the sense of inferiority of intelligence which he had experienced in his encounter with his fellow-men, keenly felt in the depths of his clear mind. Heart, she believed, he had none—or, to speak more exactly, that it was so buried under the weight of his ambition that its feeble flutterings were scarcely perceptible to its owner, and never disturbing.

He was eight-and-twenty, and she remembered his having told her one day that he had never loved any woman—at least, to be quite accurate, his words were "been in love with." It was difficult to believe it of any man of his age, and yet, knowing something of his nature—more than possible in his case. He had all his feelings well under control. Had she not often watched the sudden quenching of the cold, quick anger that arose, vehement and bitter, at some chance word or act of an acquaintance not too well liked? Indeed, had she not even *felt* it—directed against herself—and its subsidence at the promptings of prudential considerations? Cold-blooded, if you like, and yet, the very strength which it argued was an attraction. It dominated her as did the mastery of another type of man. It was the sense of power and strength in both. In one it was the physical strength of the primitive savage man. In the other it displayed itself in his self-control. One a relic of barbarism, the other the same quality in a high state of civilisation. This man was not without those animal instincts, she felt sure, but in his case they had been subdued and hidden away out of sight—that was all the difference. They were there all the same, giving the nameless attraction to his

personality. Energy, fire, determination, lay behind that polished exterior.

"Love!" he had once said, also in one of their long and intimate talks, "I do not believe in it. Infatuation there is, if you like, which, of a necessity, is short lived. One can, of course, recall one or two exceptions, of its having lasted a lifetime, but they are rare. As a rule, we may safely assert that the awakening is inevitable—for men—with women perhaps it is different. They live in their emotions. Men have work to do in the world, and little time for such things, except in giving them a very secondary place."

No one, whom he took the trouble to interest, but must feel their ambitions and thoughts quicken into greater activity under the spell of his influence. Why was he attentive to her? She had never yet been able to deceive herself into believing he cared for her. She felt that she was neither clever enough to really interest him intellectually, nor yet sufficiently stupid to call up the innate instincts of chivalry which every good man feels more or less strongly for everything that is helpless and deficient in mind or body. With her it was different. The lurking mystery attaching to natures such as his attracted her. That which was transparent lacked charm. She believed that she read a certain spirituality in his splendid eyes. The curtain-like fringe of them hid thoughts and aspirations she desired to share. The shadows in the hollows of his thin cheeks held secrets. . . . But she was always unable to define in words the exact manner in which his personality affected her. Only—all men beside him seemed slow, quiet, lifeless. He alone was vibrating with suppressed vitality to the finger-tips. His eyes, so eager and questioning, and yet so full of that indefinable, unfathomable longing that some eyes hold, and very few—asked, almost extorted, one's best. One could never be "banal," she thought, commonplace, while they were fixed upon one. One must rise to the level demanded. . . . But they did not ask, nor want, affection. . . . Only the best of one's intellect. They wanted that which would further their material good in this world,

she sometimes told herself rather bitterly—one's interest in high places, the best of one's knowledge and experience. And yet, they alone of all the face, were neither cold nor hard: far from it. It was just this knowledge which prevented her from feeling satisfied that she understood him. There was fire of a sort there now, and perhaps some day there would be passion at the back. . . . At present they saw passion's weaknesses only—not its raptures: saw, and despised them. Intellect reigned supreme. But, if ever the passions of that man's soul were roused—Oh! might she be there to see! For, of a surety, some day there would come into his life the heavenly spark, the touchstone of existence, to complete that which in his nature was now lacking. Work, ambition, strenuous endeavour was at present, the keynote to his whole being. . . . Ah, should she ever understand such a strange, potent, detached individuality? Though she guessed he was but using her to further his own ends, yet she was unable to escape from the fascination he exercised over her at times. She could not get away from him. His punctilious performance of conventional duties surprised her always, though there were times when he appeared to hold "society's" ways in derision—and again, times when he seemed to koo-too with the best at the shrine of society's favourites—each mood, seemingly genuine at the moment.

His silences nettled her, his attentions heightened the distrust which was never altogether absent in her estimate of him. She seldom felt altogether at ease in his presence—never under natural circumstances and only occasionally under artificial ones. At present he had developed a sore in her mind. His manners, which, superficially speaking were excellent, had the faculty of gaining him friends while leaving them, more often than not, undecided as to his absolute sincerity. She imagined that, in a degree, he was generally sincere—so long as he felt that he could afford to be so, but that he would not hesitate in sacrificing truth to good manners did any question of expediency hold the balance. His moments of expansion and self-forgetfulness were too rare, she began

to fear, to allow of her ever getting very close to the natural man.

As was often the case, her hint of disapproval seemed to have had the effect of quickening his coldness into some show of warmth. She guessed that he would never again voluntarily allude to his antecedents, and she wished that she had seized her opportunity.

He lead the conversation after this, and it turned, as it so often did in his hands, upon marriage. "When men reach my age they begin to think about such things seriously, as a rule—whether they have anyone definite in view or no. They see their friends settling down in happy homes. The self-sufficiency of youth, and the first all-engrossing excitement of various forms of amusement has died down a bit—and that is the moment when a man begins to feel his loneliness," with a shy laugh. "But I sometimes fear that I am doomed to a single life—perfection is so hard to find."

"If you cared much for anyone, would she not appear perfection in your eyes?" rather wistfully.

"No, I fear not. I am too critical by nature, and perhaps no girl would be content to marry a man who, even in the early stages of life together, had his eyes open to imperfections. What do you think?"

"I?—well, it would depend upon how blind she was herself, I suppose——"

"Are *you* very blind—can you imagine yourself caring enough for a man to marry him under those circumstances?" The tense look in his face never altered.

She moved a little and did not answer at once; then she burst out: "Oh! how you cold-blooded people lose——!"

"Lose? No, I think not. Surely you do not consider it an advantage to marry, believing fully in the perfection of the individual, only to wake to discover your mistake?"

"Yes," steadily, "I do, because some never wake to disillusion. Besides, in this world I think one often finds that which one expects to find—no more, and no less. It has often been said that we find in a book only that

which we take to its reading. May this not be true also of the book of Life? If I had had more faith in myself, my own good luck, would not fortune have been more kind? In one sense certainly I think it would—faith in myself would have given me a manner which I believe would have compelled what I sought. The world—easily affected by personal influence, that inexplicable human quality—seeing that I expected and claimed a certain thing would in all probability have conceded it to me as a matter of course. At least, such I have found to have been the case in the rare instances in which happiness has allowed of my putting forth my best. Happiness begets happiness."

She stopped short, laughing a little awkwardly.

His restless eyes shone in the firelight as he uncrossed and re-crossed his long legs and answered hesitatingly :

"What am I to understand by that? That you have not been so happy as I imagined? Why, I wonder. You seem to be the possessor of all that makes women happy—position, talent, vivacity, charm, sympathy."

"Stop!" she cried, colouring. "You make me blush." But she noticed the order in which he named her supposed merits, and knew that she would have reversed their order, had she been enumerating them; and she hardened accordingly. "Yes. Perhaps I am to be envied. Perhaps, after all, it is only my temperament which is at fault."

He perceptibly warmed.

"No. Your fault, if one may call it so, lies in your being too sympathetic. One gets on far better in life—for one's own comfort, of course, I mean—without sympathy. Personally, I don't think I possess much. I believe in work, in tact, in energy—to get one on in the world and as producers of happiness—very little in feelings." Then, seeing that he had made a false step he instantly tried to retrieve it. "But, after all, do not such things last longer than evanescent feelings? For the woman I married I would work day and night. Men want a companion in that work, someone to help them—not a doll to pet and spoil, and then grow tired of."

But there came a difference in their relations after this. Conversation halted. Was he not—however much she tried to persuade herself otherwise—merely a coldly, calculating man of the world, *incapable* of the ordinary feelings of humanity? And she, an over-strained world-worn woman, for whom the freshness and glamour of life had passed?

Yes, it must be true, men looked upon her now as a pleasant companion only, the "desire of nearness" was no more. Perhaps she could be useful to him; if so, she was worth cultivating, worth the expenditure of a little apparent interest, as a means to an end. But for him, she was not a *woman*—only a companion. The thought cut her to the heart, until she reflected that perhaps, after all, it was the man's nature which was at fault, not hers; he had so often given her to understand that the faculty of caring greatly for anyone was not in him.

Snatches out of Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde" came to them from some distant room, in the pause that followed.

"Do you care for Wagner?" he asked. "Do you feel his influence?"

"Enormously. Especially that. I shall never forget the first time I heard it."

"He influences your sex tremendously, and in 'Tristan' particularly."

"What is the reason? Why not men as much?"

"This. Women are, as a rule, less well educated than men, more emotional, and less given to analysing their sensations. Men, on the contrary, when a certain stage is reached, pause, and analyse what it is they are feeling. I do. I never let myself go—never have done in my life, and never shall. I weigh things. I shall never make the mistake some of my friends have made, and act without sufficient thought, against my convictions."

She looked at him in the firelight and wondered if it was really true—that in all his strenuous young life he had never been carried away, out of himself, into the whirlpool of emotion? Had never felt the tempter's power as other young men of her acquaintance had done

—her own brother, dear boy, for instance? Had never felt the exaltation of self-sacrifice? Was he wholly, as he said, prudent, far-seeing, self-confident, a power sufficient unto himself?

She sighed. He was strong—sometimes he was humble, at which moments she was as wax in his hands did he but know it; for humility in one of his nature touched her strangely. But she could not imagine him capable of over-coming these characteristics sufficiently to become simply—lovable!

In a minute he continued:

"You who are sympathetic do you not understand what I mean? I like to be honest—God knows I have not many good qualities," in one of his sudden lapses into humility, which melted her mood towards him instantly; "but I don't wish to deceive anyone. I am naturally horribly, impossibly reserved, and I find it difficult to speak of my inmost thoughts upon certain subjects. I think I once told you that I have never been in love—as you probably understand it—and believe I never shall be. Sometimes I am drawn towards girls and women, though, in my own fashion, I—I," he stumbled and hesitated, "I care for them, one in particular. I wonder, may I express myself, can I?" His glance was fixed on her downcast face as he paused. Her heart was beating fast and she could not think—feel—anything except that some sort of crisis was imminent. Then—a swift step—their hostess halting on the threshold with a short:

"Oh! I beg your pardon, I did not know. I came to see if you cared to play 'Pyramids'?" caused Ivy to stand up quickly.

"Thanks. I am very tired. I think, if you don't mind, I will go to bed."

The evident confusion of their hostess set some contrary tide of feeling in motion in the man. He also rose stiffly, and as Ivy gave him her hand he barely touched the cold fingers in bidding her good-night, and left the room by the glass door through which he had previously entered, without offering to accompany her to the foot of the stairs or give her her candle as was his wont. His

eyes were as cold as steel, and an indefinable expression of annoyance had settled over his clean-shaven face as he turned away.

* * * *

The next morning the aspect of things for her changed. She awoke happy and alert, her mind full of the conversation of the previous evening. But breakfast was trying, the day though late in the autumn, hot. It started badly. Her hostess seemed anxious she should make no plans for the day until the men put in an appearance.

"Eustace will probably be wanting you to go for a walk," she said; "but don't let him tire you. He is a tremendous walker."

The morning dragged. At last church-goers departed to array themselves. Ivy made an insincere movement to follow in their steps.

"Do wait a minute," called out her hostess, eagerly, "Eustace will be so disappointed if he finds you gone when he comes down."

He was sent for. Ivy grew hot and uncomfortable, decided, hurriedly, to go to church with the others, and so beat a hasty retreat, that she might not be openly shamed by a forced show of interest and reluctant offer of escort from Eustace, a course of procedure, she felt, from numerous past experiences of such-like small humiliations, that he was quite capable of.

She and Eustace met in the hall. There was even now no mention of accompanying her, nor any suggestion of change of plans. Her mind was in a tumult. . . . Church soothed her, the familiar hymns taking her back to simpler days of childish memory. . . . On their return she found that the men and remaining ladies of the party had started immediately she had left, for a long bicycle ride, and were not expected back for some time. Her spirits sank again. He had not given her the option of joining them.

Afterwards she took a book and sat out in the balmy sweet air by the steps of the drawing-room window.

Early in the afternoon, Eustace, back from the expedition, looked out at her on his way to get something to

eat, and threw her a few words. . . . She could no longer fix her attention on the pages. She lay back, her pulses beating thickly and irregularly, expecting Eustace in every footfall. Others, sons of the house, guests, in passing, spoke a word or so and left her—some on their way for a walk, some to play a childish game at the other side of the long low house with the younger members of the party, in which she was not invited to join.

So she lay back in her garden chair, staring out at the autumn tints in the distance, in their tender and faint colours, growing more low-spirited and full of a sense of aggrivement, as the afternoon wore on. Still he tarried. . . . At last, in desperation at the mood that was descending upon her, and with the tears of a bitter mortification not far from her eyes, she rose and crept quietly away by herself. No one would miss her. Through the field of felled elms and their standing brothers, quickly past the group of happy boys and girls in wild spirits, deep in their sport—to the dear hill side and the immense stretches of wide grey-green, to the tender soothing of Nature's hand, and the illimitable vision of sea, and sky, and hill. Her heart lay heavy within her. She felt the grip of her years—the tightening of the skin upon her face—a something that came to her at once now at the first touch of trouble ever since that time in the past. . . . Yet—her heart yearned over this man—the feeling she had for him was strangely confused with the maternal instinct. She was older than him in the sorrows which go to make up the experience of life. What did it feel like to have the emotions under the iron control he was able to exercise over his? or was it really true that earthly passions, hopes and fears, and human weaknesses, did not touch him as they touched others? Was the force of inherent habit stronger than they? And yet—there was much that was pathetic in the boyish face. . . . Then, again, the recollection of her own humiliations—those innumerable humiliations that, ever since she had known him, he had seemed to take an unnatural pleasure in inflicting upon her—moved her to momentary anger. . . . The mournfulness of

life was brooding over the sea, and lying in the blue mist-filled hollows of the hills. . . . She wandered on in the sunshine and sat on the beach dreaming, by herself. Not the least touch of expectancy moved her. She sat quietly, watching the rolling in of the long waves. It was high tide, but on the turn. Each curling smooth wave broke in a froth of foam, and careened in milky whiteness almost to her feet. She did not move, she knew that its limits were reached. The sky was blue behind her, but in front, across the sea, it was barred with long drifts of thin grey cloud, and the sun was half-obscured in a temporary veil of mist. Eastwards, dense clouds of an opaque hue lined the horizon edge, like the outlines of a distant battlemented city, shooting upwards into the pale duck-green. The rolling heave showed muddy yellow where the sunlight—such as it was—struck through and made it transparent. A dull roar filled earth and sky. The fine spray coming softly against her face, wetted her veil. . . . The thoughts of his recent behaviour made her bitter, and angry, and sad all at the same time. With dread she recognised the fact that time did but increase the interest she felt, and deepen the ever-present sense of her own impotence to impress her true personality where most she would wish to do so. She, in his presence, was feeble, diffident, ineffectual. . . . It had been a long day, and had commenced gaily enough. But the reaction had set in early—the painful trembling, the longing for a kind word that so seldom comes when most needed.

"Hullo! so I have found you at last! What made you depart from us in that ghostly fashion—bored again, eh?"

It was Eustace. She was subdued and quietly earnest.

"No, not bored—but I felt lonely. I went to church, and then found you had all gone bicycling."

"I didn't ask you to join us," he said gently, as usual divining the drift of her thought, "because I thought it would be too long a ride for you."

Was he sincere, she wondered, or was this only a suddenly invented excuse?

"Besides," he went on, "I know you don't care about missing church. What sort of a service did they give you?"

"Oh! a very nice one. The singing was good, and they had hymns which took me back to early days."

"The lessons are what I like the best always," he went on, evidently with the wish to talk of that which would please her. "What did you have to-day?"

"The expulsion from Paradise."—After a moment's pause she quoted, dreamily, "'And her desire shall be to her husband.' That has never struck me as being much of a curse, somehow; it seems to me it would be one's natural instinct to look up to him—one's pleasure as well. How often curses are only disguised blessings! The man's curse also, 'In the sweat of thy brow,' &c. A man, if he is worth anything, finds his greatest pleasure in work, doesn't he?—I'm sure you do!"

"Yes," he answered, musing in his turn. "And have you ever reflected how wonderful must have been the time of man's innocency? Think of what that means—in us." And he paused, flashing his strange, changeful-coloured eyes—as changeful as the sea—in his peculiar manner, and adding, "That is always one of my favourite lessons. It makes one think a bit. It was the childhood of the world. Children are innocent, like that. Ah! to to be a child again!"

He spoke in a tone, and with a feeling, she seldom heard from him. Was it a part of the acting? The next minute she hated herself for her doubt of him.

"Yes, if one only could! As a child one doesn't think. Things are more difficult later, and yet I believe if people spoke the truth, the average woman, and man also, wishes to be good, rather than bad."

He glanced up quickly. "True! Every man has his ideal, and tries to live up to it, speaking generally."

Was he, in his inmost heart, laughing at her? Perhaps. But she comforted herself with the reflection that, even so, he did not know her life, nor her thoughts, and therefore could not positively affirm that she might not be doing the same of him. How seldom even such depths

as these were reached—never the bottom ; though, when he chose, conversation never flagged, nor the interest of it. At times such as now she fancied that the vague longings of all humanity touched him—the universal craving for appreciation and praise ; and then he turned to women as to something kindly and uncritical.

"You guessed last night what I had made up my mind to say to you?"

She started. It came so suddenly that she was hurried into answering, rather baldly, "Ye-es—I think so." She began flinging pebbles into the waves as they frothed.

"How do you feel about it?"

"Is it fair to put it quite like that?"

He moved impatiently. "I mean, do you think that you and I are too dissimilar to be able to make a good thing out of our joint lives—always supposing, of course, that you are sufficiently interested in me to care to try?"

The strange wording of his proposal touched a dormant sense of humour in her straining mind. She wavered. Her downcast eyes rested upon his hand, lying inert upon the stones, and something in the look of the long, thin fingers, with the gold signet ring upon the little finger, awoke in a lively degree the protecting instinct. He wanted, badly, someone to take care of him, to love him, even though he hardly recognised the fact himself. Perhaps it was a risk—but surely, only to her—and *that* mattered to no-one but herself. She looked up into his face, which bore its most careworn expression at that moment.

"You and I," she said, "are at different ends of a complex strand of society. That which, in me, attracts you, I feel that you will soon have assimilated, and then, what is to happen to our friendship? I see possibilities in you which I hardly think it will be my lot to evoke. Somebody else may, though——"

"Nonsense! What do you take me for? How often am I to tell you that I am not that sort? Have I ever hidden from you that I am cold? But I need not necessarily be faithless too. What an inhuman monster I must

seem to you. Tell me, Ivy, can't you trust me? I believe you do care for me a little, and I—well, you know, don't you?—because it is the absolute truth—that I care for no one in the world so much as you. Won't you give me a trial even?"

Her eyes were searching his face oddly for something which was not there. She sighed, and then smiled. "Yes, I will trust you. But I will only take you on trial. It is between ourselves, remember."

"On trial—for how long? You don't mean that—that——" he hesitated, and she finished the sentence in her own way.

"I want to satisfy myself first that you will not regret it. Remember, you yourself say that women live on their emotions. I have a condition to make. When you can tell me that you understand what it is to hold a woman's love dearer even than fame—even though I be not that woman—then I shall be willing to discuss this question with you seriously. Even for you I think I can hardly sink my own feelings more than that concession implies, do you?"

Her voice was very sad.

"Now let us talk of something else," she continued, hurriedly rising, as though fearful of what his answer might be should she allow him time for thought. "We must be going back. You know that Miss Rowthe comes to-day?" dropping her earnestness of manner with the change of subject.

Falling in at once with her new mood, he answered lightly, "What a name! Who is she?"

She saw the lines deepen round his mouth; they did not improve him.

"She sings. She is not in what you would consider as any society in particular. Her people are poor—very poor. She has neither the means nor the taste, I imagine, to dress well. I should say she seldom makes one of a house-party such as this. I wonder how she will strike you."

She spoke quietly, vouchsafing nothing, beyond this bald statement of facts.

"Your description doesn't sound very prepossessing! I don't suppose we shall have much in common, or see a great deal of one another." There was a perceptible sneer in his tones as he strode quickly along beside her in the soft dusk.

It was dark before they reached the house. They found the others assembled in the big hall having tea. Miss Rowthe had already arrived, and was introduced to Eustace. Ivy watched his face. It expressed, to her who knew its varying expressions so well, all that she had expected it would express at that moment. The tones of his voice betrayed all, and more than, his sneer in anticipation had forewarned her to expect, and she smiled.

As the days passed on, Ivy saw the distaste with which Eustace fulfilled the obligations of ordinary civility when Mary Rowthe was unavoidably his companion, daily increasing. He was as nearly rude as only men of his calibre ever dare to be—as men of his cold, incisive speech ever can be. And her heart ached for the other's mortification. She watched his restless eyes roving critically over the undistinguished general effect of her appearance.

Each morning, as her friend entered the breakfast-room something spoke loudly to Ivy's consciousness of his contemptuous condemnation of the poor, ill-made clothes, the unfashionably dressed hair. And it hurt her like a blow. In silences such as these the defects of the man jarred upon her straining sensibilities. The feet of clay were not to be hidden by the immaculate shoes! With the years, though, had come a strange tolerance of the weakness of others, for she had felt how far short she herself had come of that inner ideal of which Eustace had spoken. With her pained recognition of such deficiencies in the man with whom she contemplated living out her life there came also a growing affection. It was inexplicable to herself. His faults seemed but to endear him to her the more.

* * * *

One night there was a concert to be attended, some

of her fellow-guests being also performers, Mary Rowthe among them.

She and Eustace, as part of the audience, were sitting beside one another. Her thoughts went back to other concerts in the past, when life held much which somehow existed no longer. Where was the glamour which used to be over it all—bright scenes so full of vague possibilities? Perhaps in heaven she would find it again. She was not even sad, only utterly indifferent. To her, the lights, the people, Eustace even, represented nothing to-night, until, suddenly, the Blue Hungarian Quartette began tuning-up. And then—and then she lost count of time, of place. She was back in an exquisite June afternoon, with a nameless brightness over sky and lawn, standing in the deep-green shade of the ancient trees at Hurlingham, and Eustace, as now, was beside her. There flashed into her memory a vow she had made to herself at that moment of intense feeling, to sink herself, her wishes, and her self-esteem even, in furthering the happiness—should the opportunity ever arise—of the man near her, who so strangely touched the chords of an old, vibrating tragedy, known to no human being but herself. . . . Ah! now, of a sudden, she could account to herself for the mysterious fascination he exercised over her reason. The roots of it reached far back into the days when she had first looked out on the brilliant world with bright young eyes. . . . With the weird music, something of that old lost feeling began stealing back over her spirit. It was a true Hungarian air the quartette—a 'cello, two fiddles, and a cymbal—were playing. All together, they worked up the emotional part of the piece, culminating in a wild, frenzied throb of passion, beating itself into her heart with the sticks—sudden—seemingly final! . . . Then, out of this maddeningly fierce 'galop,' which stopped dead, there crept the thinnest thread of a yearning cry—quavered—trembled itself to a pitiful death, and was swallowed up in the rising "furore" of the other instruments. This was repeated again and again, and each time it tore her heart-strings. It was the voice of that—human yearning which was a

reality in the secret life of each one of those, perhaps, who sat listening so quietly to it. . . . Far away, in Ivy's vision, the stately trees bordered the glistening water, and over the soft green slope the trailing glory of gay gowns swept on. . . . In the exaltation which possessed her, she prayed that the strength of her vow might be tested.

A movement in their row of seats aroused her from her reverie. Mary Rowthe was about to sing.

And then a strange thing befell. It was as though suddenly, for the first time since she had known him, a cord of communication had been established between her and Eustace's inner life, as the opening words of the song rang out. It was as if the dormant soul in the hard cold man-of-the-world was trembling to an awakening. Mary Rowthe had been antipathetic to him in every way, Ivy knew, until the moment that she got up on to the platform and began singing.

* * * *

"Tears, Idle Tears," was the name of the song, and the pathos of it all—the words, so appropriate to the lonely figure verging upon middle-age standing before the smart audience in her shabby gown—struck deep into his heart. The hall was very hot. He was very tired—so must she have been, if faces are any criterion of feeling. Her pallor had grown ghastly, her sunken eyes half-veiled by the heavy pale lids. The colourless and mobile lips now and again as she sang were drawn away and upwards from the teeth which were curiously uneven in the immediate front, giving a somewhat strange expression to the face while singing. . . . Some magnetic attraction kept his eyes fixed upon the pathetic face—so pale and tired, and full of a fugitive suffering, physical or mental. He lost himself in dreams of what lay behind those veiled lids—what capabilities of joy, or the reverse.

As he watched, the long thin fingers interlaced themselves nervously, and the hands rested so, palms downwards, white as dead hands, against the dense unrelieved black of the evening gown.

His heart, perhaps, for the first time in his life, ached strangely. The pulses in his head throbbed. An electric thrill seemed to pervade the atmosphere of the big hushed hall. "Wild with all regret"—the words hung in the air, knocked at the door of his heart, beat in his brain. . . . What did they mean—what regret was possible? . . . Was it magnetic, this curious influence he felt? . . . That pale gold hair, coiled round and round the over-large head, belonged surely to no ordinary human woman.

To Ivy, spirit-land was all about her. This world and its manifold temptations, interests and fears, fell away, leaving only a dreamland peace created of sweet sounds and old memories. It has been said that "Our real life is not the life we live, and we feel that our deepest, nay, our most intimate thoughts, are quite apart from ourselves, for we are other than our thoughts and our dreams. And it is only at special moments—it may be by merest accident—that we live our own life. Will the day ever dawn when we shall be what we are?" Something of the sense of these words was with her then.

* * * *

As the woman stepped down from the platform amid a roar of applause, the eyes of Eustace and Ivy met, dazed as though awakening from a trance.

In the 'bus, all the way home through the softly-falling moonlight, the words—"wild with all regret"—sang in his head. Opposite to him sat Mary Rowthe, leaning back as if exhausted, her eyes closed, and one white hand, ungloved, lying against the dark fur of the rug. Now and again a white moon-ray gleamed on her smooth-braided hair, in its old-fashioned coiffure.

With unwonted alacrity he helped her to descend. Thanking him coldly, she passed into the house, he following close behind her. At supper he tried to draw her into conversation. She turned her back upon him, engrossed by the son of the house.

The next day, heavy-eyed, and late for breakfast, Miss Rowthe nevertheless excelled herself in sallies of wit, an

exaggeration of the style of manner Eustace had so summarily condemned to Ivy. And it was as though she gloried in his disapproval.

Nevertheless, he was unable to keep away from her; at every turn he was at her elbow. In the sunny garden he tried his utmost to make her talk to him. Now and then she appeared to assume an interest; more usually she responded flippantly to his overtures.

He noticed the rubbed ends of her black gloves and the "impossible" hang of her black serge skirt with a new sensation—a sort of reverent pity—and when she forcibly dragged into her conversation sordid details of the poverty of her home life, he was conscious of a fierce longing to take her from it all, and to shield her henceforth from the rough usages of such an existence.

And yet, at the same time, her speech, her dress, her ways jarred horribly upon the ultra-refinement of his sensibilities, perhaps even in a greater degree than they had done the first day he had seen her.

Once, when, in talking, she had appeared to respond in a small degree to his earnestness, and to warm into some slight mark of familiarity in speech—he drew back in a sudden involuntary distaste, greater than usual, which her subsequent coldness showed him had been sufficiently evident to her quick intelligence.

An upheaval was going on in his inner life, and he knew not what to make of it.

* * * *

Ivy was sitting late over her fire that night when there came a gentle tap at her door.

"Come in," she called, and Mary Rowthe entered.

"Ah, Mary, how nice of you! I hardly have seen anything at all of you since you have been here."

"No. You have been otherwise occupied—until to-day!"

"What do you mean?" flushing slightly.

For answer she put another question—"Who is that man?"

"Which man—why do you speak in riddles?" evasively.

Mary knelt down by the fire at the foot of the chair in which Ivy was leaning back.

"Don't be a goose to me, Ivy. We have known each other long enough I think for you to be frank with me. Who is he?"

"Mr. Legge—Eustace Legge."

"Yes. But *who* is he?"

"I don't know. I met him in London, and we have seen a good bit of one another."

"Where does he come from?"

"I don't know. I haven't inquired, and I fancy I should not learn much if I did."

"You mean——?"

"Exactly. I've a shrewd notion that there's 'no-where' and 'no one' much to 'come from'."

"You used to be so particular——"

"So I am—in a fashion."

"And yet you like him?" Somewhat wistfully, as she turned, still kneeling, and put her two hands on the arms of the low chair, the better to see into her friend's face.

"I never said so," again evasively.

"Does he like *you*?"

"No!" emphatically. "Not as you understand it."

"Then——?"

"Well——?"

"Don't be so stupid, Ivy, or I shall shake you. In plain words then, since you will have it so, what is the attraction?"

"He stimulates me."

"How? To what end?"

"By his conversation—to the end that I may write better."

"Write—write! Is that always to be the ultimate aim of your existence? You are throwing away your life. Why do you not marry—he wishes it?" With a little, strained eagerness in her voice which, apparently was lost upon the other.

"Yes. Since you have guessed it, he does. But the question is, can I, could I ever, make him happy? There are times when I am inclined to believe that I

can ; that I can help him, further his ambitions in life, that I am, in a word, necessary to him. But these moments are brief and those that follow are bitter ! Oh ! Mary, you don't know—how should you guess?—how my whole past as well as my future is bound up in this ! Then also, my belief in the fact that some day I may do something in literature is the only one of all the old illusions still left to me, and who so able—with his stimulating presence and his interest in the book world—to help me to this end ? . . . What is real, what is visionary ? I live a double life—and always have done since those brief bright days of unthinking girlhood. Sometimes I feel that I am nothing more than a fraud, a shifting characterless fraud, half hoping even yet for that to come to pass which I know to be impossible, forgetting that youth is really over."

She paused. The sound of the sea, half a league away, came down the road on the breath of the wind with its insistent resonant voice—an echo of the voice that cries in the heart of each one of us with the vague and hopeless questioning it ever holds ; "Whither, whither, this life of ours ? Why these sorrows, joys, and tears ? Why these hopes and fears and longings ? Whence come we, whither go we ?" Nothing ever answers, and ever the questioning goes on.

Then Mary began again, still searching her friend's face with her large, soft, pale grey eyes. "Why, if he interests you, do you not like him ?"

"I never said that I did not ! Oh ! Mary, it is so difficult to explain, even to you."

"Well, to change the question, if he does not like you as you so emphatically declare, why does he want to marry you ?"

"A million 'why's' ! Because, without caring for me vastly, it may yet be that he can find me interesting. I am more or less in earnest, as the world goes—so is he. Life is very real to him after a fashion. I am in a better set too perhaps than he is himself, notwithstanding his great wealth, and he is sufficiently acute to realise that there is some advantage to be got out of that."

"Then you think that he likes you—cultivates you, shall we say—for the mere object of 'getting on in the world'?"

"Precisely! As I do him. For, as you know, my idea at present of 'getting on in the world' lies in the possibility of writing something that will be read—and he is, in this, my sheet anchor."

"When you speak in that voice, Ivy, I generally doubt you. For some reason you always seem to be ashamed of allowing that you have any feeling. . . . Ah! your lips are quivering. . . . What is it? Ivy, you can trust me. I will never fail you, and you know it."

The girl leaned over towards Mary, tears had gathered in her eyes, and she muttered brokenly. "He is my youth come back to me. I cannot lose my one chance. Am I wrong? If I did not believe I could be useful to him I would not entertain the thought. Am I wrong? He is so much to me, don't you understand, Mary—but sometimes I fear he will *never* care for me—that he has no heart."

Her face was buried in her friend's shoulder or she would have seen the mouth tight-shut, and the white lids falling over the eyes that held such a strange longing, as she answered with a little laugh that broke off in the middle:

"Is it as bad as that, little one? I didn't know. Don't fret. It will come all right in the end. Your secret is safe with me. I wanted to know how things were. You and I are old friends, aren't we. Believe me, he has a human nature like the rest of us, which time will prove. Good-night!" She kissed her, and then said, wistfully, "Say, Ivy, that you trust me—say it?"

"Why, of course, who, if not you, after all these years!"

And the next minute she was alone again with her thoughts.

* * * *

The days went by, slowly to Ivy, one by one. To Mary Rowthe they were as lightening flashes, and yet every hour was indelibly imprinted on her mind as they

flashed past. And the last of them dawned and faded, bringing the evening.

After dinner she sang, at Eustace's request. . . . He was leaning back in the high-backed old sofa, alone; his hands between his crossed legs, hungrily watching every movement, every expression on the deathly-white face of the woman at the piano.

They had the room to themselves, billiards holding more attractions than music for the younger guests.

Now and then her short-sighted eyes peered forward at the printed sheet in front of her. Then she would fling back her head and let her weary lids droop over the tired eyes, as the wild and beautiful notes poured forth. His own eyes flashed and blazed in their ceaseless movements.

"Come," he said at last—"come and sit down. I want to talk to you. It is the last night, and you look so horribly tired. What is the matter with you?"

"What should be the matter? People don't often bother about me?" a little bitterly.

"No. Your life has been spent in serving others, I think."

She moved slowly to the fire, and sat in a low chair before it, looking into its heart as Ivy had done days ago. Did he remember that?

"You *are* tired?"

"Oh, so tired," she answered, with another little laugh that might almost have been a sob.

His hard mouth softened.

"I don't know what it is you have done to me," he went on, without moving, in odd, broken sentences. "I want to tell you, though, if I can. I believe, I feel somehow, that I owe it you. Naturally, I should wish to appear my best to you now. It is too late; you cannot forget my earlier behaviour, neither can I."

He uncrossed his legs and leant over his knees, his hands hanging down between them.

"Tell me," she said, without looking at him, "why you made up your mind to dislike me so intensely, almost

before we had exchanged a word? Do you still?" Her voice fell at the last words.

He lifted his head.

"I am attracted to you against all my conscious instincts. As you sit there in the firelight with your pale hair gleaming, its unusual length coiled round your head—I had almost said 'unnatural,' to fit in with my idea of you—in coils of moony gold, with your great eyes drawing me from under their veiling heavy lids, a magnetic power in your compelling personality makes itself felt in a quiver of tingling sensation through all my vital frame."

He spoke with a kind of dazed passion. He got up unsteadily and leaned against the mantelpiece in front of her. "Attraction and repulsion are at work at one and the same time. Till this moment, perhaps, you have been unaware of the former, but you question me as to the latter. I answer evasively. Though I am 'natural' by instinct (which, I take it, is another word for brutal and outspoken) I shrink from hurting your feelings by answering your question 'naturally,' but a certain nobleness in your nature deters me from shuffling out of the responsibilities of perfect truth. Can you realise, I wonder, that this is so, or do you dream that my answer contains the whole truth?"

"I dare not meet your eyes. Were I to do so, and they were to look deep into mine, and if, at the same time those soft white arms were about me I feel, I *know* that my soul might slip from my keeping to yours. . . . You could do with me as you would. I should no longer have power over myself or my thoughts, though all the while the other part of the feeling you impress me with of which I have spoken would make of that strange bliss a torture not to be borne. I believe you to be good. But even were it not so, the strange power which you, and you only of all people I have ever known, wield over me would be the same, and I should sink into a slough of degradation such as I have never yet contemplated.

"But, even as I speak, my senses are keenly alive to the unutterable melancholy of your eyes. I *know*—no,

do not speak ; the power you possess, and which has filled me with thoughts and feelings I never thought to experience, and in which indeed I did not believe before we met, of penetrating to my inmost heart and revealing what was hid even from myself, gives me also a like capacity of seeing into yours, and therefore I *know* that which you would perhaps deny with your lips—those dear lips that I have never touched. . . . Why should you care for *me*? Or why fear to speak to-night, just this once, of that which is filling your heart? What was I—I, with my stony demeanour, my cold impassiveness, to you? My dear, why are you shy of me?" He moved towards her, but she shrank away from his persuasive voice.

Then she rose, and stood beside him on the hearth-rug. Afar off in the stillness there sounded again the dim surging of the waves upon the beach, like the sighing of the great heart of the world.

They stood facing one another, she with an almost audible appeal to him in her grey eyes—an appeal for sympathy, for strength, for *help*, which he as mutely ignored. He was a man, and bent upon seizing, at whatever cost to himself or others, the thing which his soul craved.

"Good-night!" she was saying, dropping her eyes as she held out a cold hand which he clasped—clasped and let go, stirred to the depth of his being by something in hers ; by something in the pale pathetic face that was to haunt him for ever.

Then suddenly he stooped, and before she could realise the position, he had pressed his lips to her cheek, once, and she had returned it, with a passion as strange as it was real. Afterwards she stood trembling and silent in the firelight a few paces away.

"Is it a dream? What do you see in me to care for like that?" His voice was low and tense—almost inaudible, and he did not attempt to touch her again, nor to lessen the distance between them. "I am hard—repellant, you say. Is it then only your great abounding love and sympathy which must needs overflow, like that of Heaven

itself, upon the worthy and unworthy alike? or can there really be something in me to call it forth?"

She was trembling no more.

"Mr. Legge," she said, "though perhaps I do not know the world as you know it, yet a woman cannot have reached my age—even in a quiet corner of the world such as that in which my days have been spent—without having discovered certain things about life. It is not likely that I shall ever marry, but were I to do so, it would not be a man who, in his secret heart and his calm moments, despises me. Also, it would be a man, I hope, who understood the meaning of the word 'faithful' in respect to small things as well as great! Perhaps I am the loser in holding such a high ideal of what a man may be"—her lip curled a little, and then her voice softened suddenly; "but, believe me, if we lose our self-respect, then, indeed, all is lost. It is the only thing of real value that we any of us possess—the one and only light given to us wherewith to guide our stumbling feet along the stony path of honourable life."

As she spoke the last words, piercing to the quick of his mind, through the undisturbed shell of a lifetime of selfishness and conventionality shot a transforming exaltation. Mystery, and the pathos of an unimaginable sadness in a face that was drenched, as it were, with a profound weariness, overwhelmed him with a new experience. He was afraid for himself and his usual grip upon his emotions. She seemed to hold in her white and beautiful hands one of the sensitive strings of his heart, composed of equal strands of love and pity, curiosity, vanity, and an inexplicable magnetic attraction. The upgathering of all these forces into one channel and outlet was accomplished by the tones of a voice divine, and the gaze of eyes that thrilled him to the soul.

There was a moment's silence and then the woman cried:

"Eustace, since the last few minutes can never be blotted out between us, I am going to ask you a favour—I, who ask favours, in my obscure life, of no man. 'Poor and proud,' you know, is an old adage," and she smiled

pitifully. "After to-morrow, we shall not meet again. Our lives lie far apart—yours in the great London world, which, in time will ring with your fame—I shall look for it in the papers, remember, always, in my remote home—I am returning to my far-off country village. What you now feel for me will pass. Do you ever read Maeterlinck? In one place he says, 'If you have ever loved profoundly you have needed no one to tell you that your soul was as great in itself as the world; that the stars, the flowers, the waves of the sea were not solitary; that it was on the threshold of appearances that everything began, but nothing ended, and that the very lips you kissed belonged to a creature who was loftier, much purer, and much more beautiful than the one whom your arms enfolded.' This is truer than, perhaps, at present you would be inclined to believe.

"But, having been through the mill myself, I *know*. It is not for nothing that I am the wreck you see. Beyond this, I am in no way suited to you. You do me the honour to say that I have given you a deeper insight into the relations possible between man and woman, and you think that this feeling is love. No! It is passion only. Till to-night I believe that both have been to you meaningless words. I have awakened the soul within you, you say also, and for that alone you owe me something. Let it turn to that which is pure, and which will lead it with gentleness to paths of peace. I never could. For me there is no peace.

"You see written in my face the fierce war I have waged, and must yet wage, with life—there is no occasion to describe that war, nor that life; it is enough to say that no helping hand was put forth to hold me when I stumbled, to raise me when I fell—perhaps I should have been a better woman had it been otherwise. I do not betray a trust under the circumstances, if I say that I know that in your case things are different. I *pray* you, do not cast away the love that enfolds you and is ready to bear with you, suffer for you, as few would. Will you—for my sake, if you like to put it so—be faithful to that which is so worthy of faithfulness, to one who will

never forsake you, nor fail you?" She held out warm hands to him as she finished. "In conclusion, and to slightly alter the mystic's words—let me feel them true of you and me—'We were about to part for ever. On that instant did the soul by the side of me awake on the summits of its being; something sprang to life in regions loftier far than the love of jaded lovers; and for all that the bodies might shrink asunder, henceforth would the souls never forget that for an instant they had beheld each other high above mountains they had never seen, and that for a second's space they had been good with a goodness they had never known until that day. . . . Nothing can ever separate two souls which have been good together.'"

A slight sound in the hush of the room brought them back from the stars to earth. Through the glass door, carrying some books of photographs which she had evidently come to replace upon the drawing-room table, appeared Ivy. Her face was illumined by the same radiance of glory, of exaltation, it had worn at the concert during the quartette, when the remembrance of her old vow had flashed into her mind.

"Eustace—Mary," she spoke in low clear tones, "You must not mind my having heard something of what you have been saying." She moistened her dry lips, and went on, unsteadily. "Perhaps, as things are, you will both understand that I—that I—could not move just at first. I was startled, and then—it was all over so quickly. Forgive me. "If what I heard is true, I am glad—that both my friends should—be happy."

After all, was not the strength of her vow being tested, as she had asked that it might?

She stopped, looking from one to the other. Eustace's face to-night seemed unfamiliar with the new expression it wore. Mary's had never lost the deathly pallor, the wan wistfulness, it had assumed since dinner. She was the first to break the vibrating silence.

"Your friend, Mr. Legge, has made a slight mistake—I hope it may be the worst he will ever make" with a peculiar smile, "I don't know how much or how little

you have heard of this conversation, but he is under the impression that I am an unholy magician! He will get over this delusion I feel sure; this belief. Especially when I tell him that—that——" she hesitated a moment and swayed slightly where she stood, so that Ivy, seeing it, stepped quickly to her side and put her arm about her for support supposing that she felt ill, little realising the conflicting waves of emotion that fought for mastery in her friend's soul, nor the strength of a renunciation equalling her own, which prompted the heroism of the next few calm words, "I could in no case be of much use to him, for I bear about with me the seeds of a death which is not far off. Consumption has taken three of my brothers in as many years; my own knell has sounded, my release is not far distant. Was it not perhaps a breath, through me, from that near yet distant spirit-land which has awakened new and strange emotions in him? If so, neither you nor I need regret this night, Ivy. Come. It grows late. . . . In the future that lies before you both, my only request is that you may not think unkindly of one who will then be lying in a lonely country grave."

And, with these words sounding in her ears as she and her friend left Eustace to his reflections, some voice from out of the dim future seemed to whisper to Ivy that her own renunciation of to-night had been rejected of destiny for a still greater renunciation—because one not accomplished in a moment, but requiring a life-time of self-abnegation for its fulfilment—even the satisfying of the needs of this man whom she now realised that, through it all, she loved sufficiently even after what she had seen and heard—after the broken faith, and evidences of callous indifference to all but his own satisfaction—to render this self-effacement a possibility.

VERNER FENTON.

The Major's Wife's Maiden Hunt.

I HAVE not the slightest doubt that Olington is considered an eminently fine town by the worthy citizens thereof. It is, I am given to understand, a centre of great manufacturing and commercial activity. It is also the *locale* of the 156th (Royal Rutland Rangers) Regimental District. The latter fact I avouch from my own personal knowledge. Manufacturing and commercial activity appears to me to carry certain disadvantages in its train. I consider Olington a most excellent place—to get away from.

I had been granted three months' leave from Pantelaria on medical certificate, at the expiration of which I presented myself before the medical board, as is usual in such cases, and was found fit for duty. The president of the board seemed to find some amusement in the proceedings. He laughed when I told him I was still feeling rather weak, and suggested that another month, I felt sure, would be of incalculable benefit to me. His manner, which to say the least of it, was brusque, banished all hope of an extension, but I never for a moment supposed that my evil star would send me to the dépôt. I had fully settled in my own mind that I would join the second battalion in Egypt. There is a good deal of scope in Egypt for a man of ability. However, man proposes and the powers that be dispose. I was directed to report myself to the officer commanding the 156th Regimental District forthwith. That was two months ago. Certain things have happened since.

Duty at a regimental dépôt is not work of a nature to bring out one's intellectual powers. On the contrary, it is distinctly monotonous. There is little or no society, and one misses the gaiety of a large garrison. It was

with a good deal of pleasure, therefore, that I received an invitation from my old chum Trevor to spend the Christmas week with him. Trevor cut the service when he married old Jefferson's daughter, three or four years ago, and has got no end of a ripping fine place down in Yorkshire. Trevor held out sundry strong inducements which I need not enter into here. My people were abroad somewhere, Constantinople or Bucharest, I forget which, and there was no one I would rather stay with during the festive season than my old chum.

It wanted three weeks to Christmas, but I was determined to take time by the forelock and ask for leave; for, owing to the smallness of our number there might be a difficulty if I postponed it too long.

"Nothing like being in good time, De Montesque," laughed the Colonel when I approached him on the subject. "I am going on leave myself next week, but I have no doubt Major Jepson will recommend you for seven days. I will mention it to him."

I thanked the chief, but my spirits were damped somewhat. The relations between Major Jepson and myself were not precisely cordial. I make all due allowance for Jepson being a disappointed man, but if the Colonel does defer to my opinion on certain matters, I do not think he is justified in showing his feelings so openly. Nor do I think it good form to ask in such a pointed way why I was sent home from Pantellaria. I never anticipated, however, that my application for leave would be refused, and I wrote to Trevor accepting his invitation. I had made all arrangements and was debating in my mind whether I would take my man Reilly or leave him to his own devices in the dépôt. He had been getting on fairly well on the whole, but I was afraid his virtue would not be proof against the temptations of Christmas. I had sounded him in a diplomatic way as to which course he would prefer, with the mental reservation that it would be to my interest to adopt the opposite, but Reilly declined to commit himself.

"Is id tu go wid ye, Sor, yer axin' wud Oi loike?" he said grumblingly. "Sure id's not for me tu be sayin'

whath Oi'd loike. Iv ye say Oi'm to go, Oi must go, loike id or lump id; but id's moighty foine doin's there's afther bein' in the dipôt at Christmas."

"Well, if you want to stay, do so," I said carelessly. "I thought you might like the trip——"

"An' have tu put up wid the airs an' graces av thim flunkies, wid their padded dhumshticks av legs, an' their bowin' an' scrapin', an' me an ould soger that has bled for his country an' sarved ye, Sor, loike a nigger——"

"That will do, Reilly," I said, cutting him short. The bleeding for his country was an effort of imagination. The scar on his face was the result of a canteen *melee*, consequent on having given too free rein to his tongue. "I am sure I should have no great reason to be proud of my servant if I took you," I continued coolly.

I was sorry I said that, Reilly seemed very vexed. He drew himself up and saluted, then left the room.

Major Jepson looked very much astonished when I asked him for leave.

"My dear de Montesque, what on earth can you be thinking about?" he demanded with a laugh. Do you recollect that there won't be anyone but you and me here, except young Spencer of the Militia? How can I recommend you for leave?"

"But I've accepted Trevor's invitation," I said desperately.

"I'm very sorry, old chap, but really I can't help it. I can assure you that two officers are none too many in the depôt at Christmas-time, for, of course, Spencer doesn't count for much."

To do Jepson justice, he seemed sorry.

"Come up and see the wife," he continued, "she came back yesterday, and she will be glad to see you."

I hardly liked to go just then. Jepson had only been married about a year, and his wife having been on a visit I had not seen her before. I was glad I went, however; I found her to be a delightful person, quite young—much too young for Jepson, and decidedly pretty. She was kindness itself, and I found myself in a few minutes chatting to her as to an old friend. I spent a very

pleasant half-hour and was rising to go, when Mrs. Jepson, with girlish peremptoriness, ordered me to sit down again.

"We cannot allow you to run away like that," she said merrily, "you must stay and be introduced to my sister and Aunt Maud. I expect them in every minute."

I resumed my seat, not unwillingly. Presently I heard the door-bell ring, and Mrs. Jepson ran out of the room, with a laughing injunction to Jepson not to allow me to escape. In a few minutes she returned, accompanied by two ladies. The elder of the two appeared to be about 45 years of age, but she was dressed in a style which would have been much more suitable for a girl of seventeen. Her complexion may have been all right when she was younger, but it was now seamed and creased, here and there, especially about the neck, in a way that threw her obviously enamelled cheeks into marked contrast. Her manner was excessively gushing.

"Oh! how delightful it *must* be to be in the army, Milly," she said after the introductions were over. "I *do* envy you! We have been watching the soldiers at their exercises. *So* interesting! and the *dear fellows*, how good-tempered they are! The person who was teaching them—an officer I suppose, but he didn't talk like a gentleman—spoke to them quite *roughly*, but they took *no* notice!"

"But you know, Aunty, they mustn't speak in the ranks," said Mrs. Jepson laughing. "I don't know much about the army yet, but I do know that."

"I am *perfectly* sure I should, Milly; I should certainly tell that person not to speak to *me* in that way."

"I don't think there is any doubt that you would, Aunty," remarked the young lady who had accompanied her, demurely.

She was a very pretty girl with dancing blue eyes, and hair all in fluffy curls about her forehead. She had a very trim figure and a neat foot and ankle. She was exceptionally well booted, too. Now, I believe that nothing tells breeding like a shapely foot, and there is no surer indication of a lady than a well turned out shoe.

"I wonder, now, if I were to point out to that person how the *dear fellows* must feel his harshness of manner, whether it would do any good," said the elder lady musingly. "What do *you* think? Mr. de Montesque," turning to me sweetly.

"My dear Aunt, I don't think I would trouble about it, if I were you," said the Major laughing. "I assure you the men are very well treated."

The lady seemed by no means satisfied. She kept prattling about the *dear fellows*, and I had a premonition that she would, through her interference in matters of which she was profoundly ignorant, bring unpleasant consequences on her own shoulders. I have observed that sort of thing happen before.

As Christmas approached, the men spent much of their spare time in decorating the barrack-rooms. In this Mrs. Jepson's aunt was very anxious to assist; but amongst us we managed to dissuade her, and drew a red herring across the scent by endeavouring to interest her in the school children's treat and the beautifying of the church. In neither of these did she show any great enthusiasm. I may say, for my part, I found the decking of the church most interesting. The dim religious light and all that sort of thing, don't you know, never seemed to appeal to me so much before. Miss St. Clair takes a good deal of interest in church decoration. It appears she has been in the habit of directing it in her own place. I asked her jokingly if the curate was a bachelor. She laughed and said she had no fancy for black coats. I wondered if she had any *penchant* for a red one. Of course, to decorate a church properly takes a good deal of time, and we were consequently pretty fully occupied for the week before Christmas. Jepson had other matters to take up his attention and Mrs. Jepson excused herself on the ground of being married and having no object in spoiling her hands and destroying her clothes. The burden of the work fell, therefore, on Miss St. Clair and myself, with such assistance as was to be got from young Spencer and the maiden aunt. I don't think Spencer cared very much

about it after the first day. At mess in the evening he had a wearied look. Five hours of the maiden aunt seemed to have been too much for him. He tried a change of front the next day. I had been on duty till later than usual, and he had taken advantage of my absence to attach himself to Miss St. Clair. The maiden aunt seemed delighted with the new arrangement, and prattled to me in a giddy girlish fashion about "the poor dear fellows" and how she *loved* soldiers till I began to tremble for my safety. I fabricated a fairy tale about being on duty, and took my departure as soon as I decently could. Miss St. Clair darted a roguish look at me as I was leaving, which I thought I understood.

I spent Christmas Eve with the Jepson's. Somehow I felt very glad that my leave had been refused. Maud St. Clair (I had come to think of her as *Maud*) had certainly made a considerable impression on me, and I found myself wondering what would happen if I were to propose. I had half a mind to try my luck if an opportunity offered.

The maiden aunt seemed much exercised in her mind because something or other she had ordered from London had not arrived. The Major and Mrs. Jepson were very anxious to know what it was, but the lady seemed determined to keep it a secret. Late in the evening a railway dray drove into barracks, and discharged two large barrels at the door of the Major's quarters. Their arrival appeared to give her much pleasure, and she laughed jocosely at our surmises regarding their contents.

"My dear people, you just wait and see. You will be so surprised, and I know the *dear fellows* will be so delighted."

The Major looked perturbed. I glanced at Miss St. Clair. Her eyes were dancing with merriment.

"But, my dear Aunt, really you know, you must tell me what you have got in these conf—, in these huge barrels. I am fully aware of—er—your generous good nature, and so on, but—er——"

"My dear Charles, you shall see in good time," she

rejoined, smiling complacently. "I do long for to-morrow evening to come."

"But——"

"No, Mr. Charles! I *won't* tell you anything more," she said, shaking her head decisively.

The Major groaned.

I could see that Miss St. Clair was immensely amused at something.

When I returned to my quarters that night my mind was fully made up. I was decidedly in love with Maud St. Clair. I had taken some time to arrive at this conclusion. I had been in love before, of course—once or twice, but this seemed more serious, decidedly more serious. The matrimonial net is not to be rushed into without due consideration. There are disadvantages associated with married life in the service, but under certain circumstances these may be borne. Should one's wife have money, for instance, It is whispered that Miss St. Clair is by no means penniless. I had not the slightest doubt in the world as to what her feelings were as regards me. I felt sure that it only remained for me to make the formal proposal, but there was very little time left in which to do this, for the two ladies were returning to Derbyshire on Boxing Day. It was, of course, according to conventional ideas, a trifle early in our acquaintance for a proposal; but then if I missed this opportunity I might never have another. On the whole, I thought I would screw my courage to the sticking point, and make the plunge. Given time, place and favourable opportunity I saw no good reason why our short acquaintance should prove a bar to my success. But here a difficulty presented itself. How and when could I get the opportunity? I cogitated long and deeply over this, but those who know me best readily admit that fertility of resource is one of my most pronounced characteristics. I was not long in drawing up a plan of campaign. Miss St. Clair would be almost certain to attend the morning Church service; neither the Major nor Mrs. Jepson were likely to go, and if the maiden aunt could only be got out of the way my scheme stood an excellent chance of being

successful. I most heartily wished that elderly lady elsewhere.

I went to bed without satisfactorily disposing of the maiden aunt. Next morning when crossing the barrack square my eyes lighted on the two barrels standing on end at the Major's door. By Jove! Could I make these the means of keeping the aunt from church and so securing Miss St. Clair to myself? Then a bright idea struck me and I hurried to my quarters and wrote the following note :

" Dear Miss St. Clair,

With reference to our conversation yesterday respecting the barrels which are still standing at the door of your quarters, may I take the liberty of detailing a fatigue party to have them moved to wherever you may wish? I regret that the only time the men can be spared will be between 11 and 12. As they are not always so careful as one could wish in such matters, I should like to be able to supervise them personally, but I find this is unfortunately impossible.

Wishing you the compliments of the season,

I am,

Dear Miss St. Clair,

Faithfully yours,

Reginald de Montesque."

" Now, if I am any judge of character that will fetch the old lady," I said to myself cheerfully. "If she doesn't see personally to the moving of these barrels, I am a fool."

Having disposed of the first, and, as I believed, most difficult part of the business, I wrote a guardedly worded note to Maud, requesting that I might be permitted the honour of accompanying her to church, and mentioning incidentally that I wanted to consult her on rather an important matter.

Having addressed the envelopes I shouted for Reilly. My summons received no response. I am not unaccustomed to this; where Reilly is concerned the cultiva-

tion of the virtue of patience becomes a necessity. A second and louder shout bearing no more fruit than the first, I looked out of the window, and, not a little to my surprise saw my man (I am hardly justified in using the possessive case, for I believe in Reilly's private opinion the position is reversed) in close conversation with the maiden aunt. The subject, judging from appearances, was the barrels. Reilly's manner was that of an indulgent parent to a very small child. The lady's confidence in him was touching. How he had managed to introduce himself to her notice was a mystery.

"And you are *sure* there will be no mistake, Mr. Reilly?"

"Ye lave id tu me, Ma'am. Just ye lave id tu me. *Oi'll* see iverything roight for ye. Not another man in the barracks cud do it, Ma'am, that is do id sathisfactory, as id sh'ud be done. Id's grate expayriance Oi've had in dalin' wid sogers, ma'am. Devil a wan more, an' if id wor'nt for me id's a moighty poor fist some av the officers 'ud mek av id. There's Mr. de Montesque, now, shure if id hadn't been for me——"

"Oh! I am sure you will carry it out *beautifully*, Mr. Reilly. Quite sure. I *know* I can depend upon you."

The lady having gone indoors, Reilly condescended to glance in my direction. He hesitated, as if in deep thought, and then leisurely approached.

"Wor ye afther calling me, Sor?" he asked with an exasperating affectation of innocence, after I had bawled to him till I was hoarse.

"Come up to my room, you infernal fool!" I said angrily.

He came into the room and stood in the middle of the floor, the picture of vacuity.

"Can I trust you to take a couple of letters to Major Jepson's?" I said freezingly.

He jerked out his chin in a contemptuous way particularly annoying.

"Sure Oi dunno. If yez think Oi can't be thrusted 'tis an asy matter tu giv' them to some wan else. Faix! tis bigger matters Oi do be thrusted wid."

"What bigger matters? Jove! the poor devil that trusts you is a fool for his pains."

"Dade, 'tis moighty little considheration *Oi'm* afther getting from ye, Sor, but sorra a bit did Oi think tu see the day ye'd use bad language about a lady," and he made a clucking sound with his tongue expressive of his commiserations for my shortcomings.

I was annoyed a good deal at his manner. Not only was it deficient in the respect due from a servant to his master, but in even a greater degree was there an absence of the respect due from a private soldier to his officer. It was most unusual with him, too, for with all his faults, and they were by no means few, he had never hitherto been wanting in the respectful veneration for me which, though doubtless in the first place engendered by military discipline, was, I am convinced, in no inconsiderable degree enhanced by the influence which a master mind must invariably have over those of inferior mental calibre.

He had been drinking, of course, but drink had not usually the effect of lessening his respect. Quite the contrary. Indeed, one could almost gauge his state of inebriety by the punctiliousness of his salute. The change in his manner must undoubtedly be due to other influences, and these not difficult to discover. I am not finding fault with Jepson, but the discipline of the *dépôt* has not improved since the Colonel has been away.

Although I am accustomed to flatter myself on the immobility of my features, probably my eye conveyed some sign of my astonishment, for Reilly pulled himself together.

"Are the *chits* ready, Sor?" he asked in a differential tone.

I looked at him sternly. I don't think he will forget himself again.

"Here are the two notes. You see one is addressed to Miss St. Clair, and the other to Miss M. St. Clair."

"Do they be for the same party, Sor?"

"No, of course not. One is for the elder Miss St. Clair, the other for the younger."

Reilly took the notes and departed, his face expressing vague dissatisfaction.

I dressed for church with more than my usual care. As I crossed the square the drums and fifes were making the barrack walls re-echo with the "church call." "Hark! the bonny Christ Church bells!" and I felt a distinct glow of pleasure as I thought of other bells—wedding bells—and Maud St. Clair. Jove! I should soon know my fate. I honestly admit I had a feeling of excitement which I cannot recollect ever having had under such circumstances before.

As I rang the Jepsons' bell I am afraid my hand actually trembled. There isn't a shadow of doubt I had it deuced bad.

As I entered the drawing-room, I was surprised to find no one there but the maiden aunt. She was dressed to kill. She came rushing towards me, quite breathlessly.

"Oh! Mr. de Montesque," she chirped, "are you *sure* we won't be late? Not that it matters, of course, not a bit. But people *do* talk, don't they? Maud and Milly, Mrs. Jepson I mean, have gone *ever* so long ago. They teased me a good deal about your note—a *billet doux* they called it, the tiresome things—and it was *so* fortunate that Mr. Reilly knew me and gave it to me where I could read it all by myself. If I had had to read it before them I am *sure* I should have blushed. And you naughty creature to address me as Miss *M.* St. Clair. You know I am the elder of the two. Now, *don't* you?"

Heavens! here was a situation! I am not deficient in *savoir-faire*, but this was too much. I doubt if I was ever in such a fix before. The ancient dame leered at me through her paint, which lay as thickly on her face as the pipeclay on a slovenly soldier's belt.

It was obviously another of the brilliant successes of the genius Reilly—the situation I mean, not the paint. *That* he would have applied more artistically. And, of course, to complete matters, he had no doubt managed to have the other note conveyed to Maud.

I am afraid I benefited very little by the service. We *were* late, and as was to be expected the church was full

and we had a difficulty in getting a seat. I could see Maud in the officer's pew, and as if to increase my chagrin, young Spencer seated by her side. Certainly he had marched the church party, but why had he taken that particular seat? There were several other pews he could have gone into.

Major Jepson invited the ladies to see the barrack-rooms before the men sat down to dinner, and young Spencer and I accompanied them. The men had really succeeded in making the rooms look very pretty. Flags were draped here and there, and bayonets and cleaning-rods were formed into stars and other devices with excellent effect. Maud seemed a little cool in her manner to me. That young ass, Spencer, kept persistently by her side. What she could see in him is really beyond me. Mrs. Jepson accompanied her husband, and the elder Miss St. Clair fell to me. This, perhaps, would not have mattered so very much had she not shown such an inclination to separate from the remainder of the party. The air of possession she evinced towards me was marked, exceedingly marked. I could observe amusement in the wooden faces of the men as they stood at attention. Her manner of expressing her admiration was trying. She would keep on prattling about the "dear fellows." Now there is nothing more exasperating to a soldier than to be spoken of in this way. It is treating him as if he were a child. The average soldier likes to be taken for what he is—a decent fellow, indifferently honest, proud of his corps, immaculate as regards his arms and equipment, fond of a joke, with a quick eye for a pretty face, an admirable judgment in beer, a religious veneration for the exigencies of "duty," whether it be as picket sentry with a stick in his hand or storming a position "at five to one against," and—a withering contempt for those who speak of him without knowledge, and they are many. Such is the typical soldier, and a deuced good type, too, if you will permit me to say so.

I was unfeignedly pleased when the thing was over and we returned to Jepsons to lunch.

I was somewhat surprised at Jepson's manner. There was a jocoseness in his remarks quite new, and half-whispered allusions passed between him and his wife, which I must admit made me feel uncomfortable, as to some extent excluding me from the conversation ; for the maiden aunt seemed perfectly to understand the points, and smirked and preened herself as if she were a young country girl being teased about her sweetheart. Young Spencer hung about Maud in a way perfectly sickening. I felt sure the poor girl must be dying with *ennui*.

"Oh ! by the way, aunt, what became of your barrels?" said the Major. "I see they have been removed."

"Yes, Mr Reilly has kindly taken charge of them till they are required to-night."

"Mr. Reilly?" said the Major, interrogatively.

"I fancy Miss St. Clair means my man, Major. I am afraid the scamp has been taking advantage of her good nature to push himself forward."

"Oh ! Mr. de Montesque, I am sure Mr. Reilly is so obliging—so polite——"

"Could it be otherwise? Like master, like man," said Maud, with a mocking bow.

Young Spencer broke out with a loud "haw ! haw !"

I wonder if anyone has ever told him of his remarkable resemblance to the quadruped into whose conversation these two syllables largely enter.

"Thank you, fair lady," I retorted with a bow, which I flatter myself would not have disgraced a Chesterfield ; "a compliment from your lips is as a pearl of price, to be treasured for all time."

Spencer laughed vacantly.

"There is something somewhere about throwing pearls before——"

"Yes," I interrupted, with a smile, "but I don't think it applies in the present instance, as Miss St. Clair was not addressing you at the moment."

I imagine my retort was sufficiently pointed to penetrate even Spencer's obtuseness. He looked extremely foolish. The Major laughed quietly to himself.

"But what is the secret of these barrels, Aunt Maud?"

demanded Mrs. Jepson, laughing. "I am sure from the way Charles groaned and muttered in his sleep last night, he has some idea that you are going to blow up the barracks, or do something equally dreadful."

The maiden aunt smiled with an air of importance.

"You won't have long to wait now. I have arranged with Mr. Reilly that my little surprise shall take place at six o'clock."

"Arranged with Mr. ——!"

"Yes, we shall all go over to the men's rooms, and——"

"What!" shouted the Major, jumping to his feet with distended eyes. "Go to the men's barrack-rooms! Go to the——! Good Lord!"

"Really, Charles, I think you might remember there are ladies present," said the maiden aunt, brindling.

I perfectly agreed with her. No gentleman should permit himself to get excited under any circumstances. In the presence of the opposite sex it is inexcusably bad form.

"But, my dear aunt," said the Major irritably; "this really musn't come off, you know. I can't explain it to you, but I assure you the men won't like it."

"Oh! but, my dear Charles, Mr. Reilly has assured me that they will be *simply delighted*, and of course he must know better than you."

The Major looked at me helplessly. I shrugged my shoulders. There was nothing to be done.

The fact that the men were keeping up Christmas in their own particular style was becoming painfully evident. Loud ringing choruses and shouts of laughter could be only too distinctly heard. It is according to the fitness of things that soldiers should be light-hearted and boisterous in their mirth. There are well-intentioned people who see evil in this, and who would make the army into a great Sunday school. They are mistaken. It would be as wise to remove the safety valve from a boiler, because the steam escaping makes an unpleasant noise. The fine old fighter, Oliver Cromwell, recognised this when he allowed his troopers a plentiful beer ration and

Private Fight-the-Good-Fight was, by way of being a religious man of sorts, too. His choruses may not have been of the music-hall type, but they served, and he sang them lustily. But under such circumstances ladies are out of place.

The maiden aunt was delighted. She would never forget, she assured me, the pleasure it had afforded her to spend Christmas with the dear fellows who fought and bled for their country.

My only consolation as we sallied out was that an opportunity might present itself of making things right with Maud. I was making my way to her side when the elder lady put her hand within my arm with an air of conscious proprietorship, and I could do nothing but accept the situation. Reilly was waiting for us at the door, and placed himself in front of the party as the Sergeant-Major does at a Colonel's inspection. I was surprised at his condition. But for the preternatural squareness of shoulder and drum-major-like swing of leg, one might have supposed him to be perfectly sober.

There was one room from which "I asked Johnny Jones" was being vociferated with additions not to be found in the authorised version, and my heart was in my mouth when I found my paragon of servants piloting us in the direction of the door. Before he reached it, however, a light seemed to break on his muddled brain, and I gave a sigh of relief when he suddenly changed direction to the right and led us into the room adjoining.

The Sergeant-Major of the dépôt was standing inside the doorway, and from the tone of his voice as he called "Attention!" it was not difficult to see that he wished us elsewhere.

At the Sergeant-Major's command the occupants of the barrack-room, some twenty-five or thirty men, sprang to their feet. They looked decidedly unhappy. At one end of the room, decorated with holly, were the two mysterious barrels.

"What the dickens is going to happen now?" I said to myself wonderingly; but my suspense was of short duration. In a moment Reilly had knocked out the heads

and a low murmur rose from the men. The barrels appeared to be filled with sawdust. What hopes had been formed regarding their contents, I had, of course, no means of knowing, but there were ill-concealed looks of disappointment, and audible mutterings expressive of anything but satisfaction. The clinking of cans and the assertion by many voices of having elicited certain information from Johnny Jones sounded tantalisingly on their ears.

The Sergeant-Major looked sternly round him and sharply ordered silence. His irritation was natural. His Christmas was being spoiled, and as he could not give expression to his feelings, he would take good care no one else did. I must say I sympathised with him.

The maiden aunt pressed closer to my arm.

"Who is that *dreadful* person who uses such a horrid tone to the poor dear fellows?" she asked eagerly. "I have observed his manner before, and it is shocking—simply shocking. I *do* wish you would speak to him—*Reginald*."

I gasped with astonishment. What the dickens did the old fool mean in addressing me by my Christian name? Could it be possible——? Surely not! The idea was too preposterous.

"The lady is spakin' tu ye, Sor," a beer-laden voice whispered huskily in my ear, in a tone of corrective admonition.

I was turning round sharply to check the man's insolence, when a cold shiver ran down my back to hear my companion address the Sergeant-Major:

"I think you are very wrong, Sir, to speak to the poor men in that way!" she exclaimed indignantly.

The Sergeant-Major gasped and looked at Major Jepson.

"My dear aunt," the Major was commencing, but she held up her hand deprecatingly, and turned towards the wondering soldiers with an insinuating smile.

"My dear men, I am afraid—indeed I am *sure* that but little interest is usually taken in your amusements, and—er—in your well-being generally by your sup—I may say by the—er—better classes——"

"Blimy! is the old girl agoin' ter guv' us er sermon," came in an audible whisper from the group.

"So I have organised a little scheme for your amusement this evening, which I think you will appreciate. I don't think any of you will guess what it is" (here the maiden aunt put on a quizzical look), "but it is called *dipping for prizes*. Now, you must all come up one by one and dip your hand in the barrel, and see what fortune will send you. I assure you it is *awful fun*. But you mustn't be naughty and come up out of your turn. Will *you* see that they come up in their proper turn, Mr. Reilly?"

"Oi will ma'am," said Reilly with an air of stern determination, placing himself in front of one of the barrels.

I noticed an ominous gleam in one or two eyes that indicated prospective bloodshed, and I took the opportunity of whispering in the Major's ear.

"By Heavens! you are right, de Montesque," he whispered back, and then aloud—" *You* had better see to that Sergeant-Major, fall back that man Reilly!"

Reilly fell back beside the maiden aunt with a look of offended dignity. As the Sergeant-Major stepped past me, I dropped the lady's arm with a muttered excuse, and bent over to him.

"What's the meaning of this foolery, Sergeant-Major?" I said *sotto voce*. I never saw disgust so plainly indicated on a man's face as on that which that excellent Warrant Officer now turned to me.

"I should think *you* ought to be able to answer that question, Sir," he said quietly, but with an undercurrent of bitterness.

"I! What do you mean, Sergeant-Major?"

"Why, you *know* you sent a message by your servant that the men of your company were to be got together and——"

"Come along, Sergeant-Major," interrupted Jepson, "Mr. de Montesque should have given his instructions before now."

The Sergeant-Major stalked forward with a malignant gleam in his eye, and an "I'll take it out of you" ex-

pression on his cast-iron countenance, and gave the commands sharply—

“Fall in! Left dress! Into file! Left turn!”

“Good gracious! Charles, there is that dreadful man again, with his awful manner. Why *could* you not let Mr. Reilly manage it?”

I heard a choking voice behind me, and turned my head to behold Maud and young Spencer shaking with suppressed laughter, and stuffing their handkerchiefs into their mouths to prevent an explosion. I felt extremely annoyed to be placed in such a ridiculous position, for the maiden aunt had regained possession of my arm and clung to it tenaciously. The Major kept looking at me in rather a queer way; he gnawed his moustache, but did not speak.

The man nearest the barrel stepped forward solemnly and pushed his hand amongst the sawdust, withdrawing it with a child's toy trumpet in his fist. He was a great brawny fellow of fifteen or sixteen years' service, with a face scarred and seamed with exposure and other things, and he looked at his prize gravely. The old lady was delighted.

“*How* appropriate! A soldier and a trumpet! Now for the *next*.”

The second was a man of less equable temperament. He plunged his hand in savagely, and a naked china doll rewarded his efforts. He muttered an oath and threw it on the ground, smashing it to atoms. The laugh from his comrades was loud and sarcastic.

The festivities in the adjoining room were becoming more noisy every minute, and where we were the men were taking advantage of the old lady's tone to the Sergeant-Major to give expression to their feelings. Her manner to them was jocular to playfulness.

“Oh! you *wicked* man,” she said, shaking her finger waggishly at one whose head showed signs of the prison barber, “I am *sure* you had your dip.”

“No, mum! S'help me! t'must 'a bin my chum.”

“Tootle-ootle-oo” sounded derisively from the tin trumpet.

"The *dear* fellows, how they are enjoying themselves!" she rhapsodised ecstatically.

Suddenly the singing in the next room ceased and a stream of men rushed out into the square.

I disengaged myself from the maiden aunt, and was just in time to witness Reilly measuring his length on the ground by a blow from the fist of the man who had drawn the doll. I, of course, ordered both to be confined, and was re-entering the room, when I met the party coming out. The Major was in a furious temper.

"I will see you at Orderly-room to-morrow, Mr. de Montesque! Such a disgraceful proceeding I never witnessed in my life. I have heard a good deal about you, but I should certainly never have credited that you would so far forget yourself as to——"

"But my dear Major," I commenced in astonishment, when he cut me short.

"Not another word to-night, Sir! I will have your explanation at the proper time and place."

I went to my quarters with my brain in a whirl. What on earth had I done? Was there a plot in all this, the outcome of Jepson's dislike? It looked extremely like it. I looked furtively at Maud as I turned away. I felt certain she must see how unjustly I was being treated, but that brute Spencer was engaging her attention with some of his milk-and-water witticisms at which she, poor girl, was affecting to laugh.

"Now, de Montesque, I should be glad of an explanation from you regarding the disgraceful *fiasco* of last evening," was the Major's greeting to me in a most overbearing tone, on the following morning.

"I beg your pardon, Major Jepson," I answered with the quiet dignity which is natural to me, "You are certainly labouring under a misapprehension. So far from having anything to do with the disgraceful *fiasco*, as you very correctly describe it, I was present very much against——"

I stopped. I was about to say very much against my will, but now I came to think of it, that was not exactly the case.

The Major observed my hesitation and took advantage of it.

"I consider it little short of disgraceful, Sir, that you should be a party to—should encourage a lady—to—to—make a—er—laughing stock of herself before the men."

"But your accusation is a most unjust one, Sir, most unjust. I had no idea in the world what Miss St. Clair had in her mind, and you will remember, Sir, that you——"

"Look at that letter, Sir," said Jepson with a malicious ring in his voice, "look at that letter and then tell me you knew nothing!"

It is strange that there should be men bearing Her Majesty's Commission with so little pretension to the manners of gentlemen. Jepson's voice was triumphant in its malice.

I glanced at the letter. It was the one I had written to the maiden aunt.

"Certainly, I wrote that note," I returned calmly; "but there is nothing in it to——"

"It shows most clearly, Sir, that you were well aware of the whole miserable business, and, considering the relation in which you stand to the lady——"

"The—the—relation in which I stand to the lady!" I exclaimed, in natural surprise.

The Major glared at me.

"Do I understand you to infer, Sir, that your attentions to Miss St. Clair—your marked attentions—had no meaning; that you have no intentions with regard to her; that you have been playing fast and loose; that—that——"

Jepson's face became purple, and he banged his fist on the desk before him. He was utterly unable to proceed, from the sheer violence of his temper.

For the moment I was nonplussed. I stared at Jepson in astonishment. Then an idea struck me. Of course he must be referring to Maud, and I had thought he was speaking of the maiden aunt.

"Really, Major, I beg your pardon. Do you know I

thought you were referring to the elder Miss St. Clair all the time. Of course, Maud and I understand each other."

"Maud! Understand each other! Are you referring to my wife's sister? If so, there is a huge mistake somewhere. Why, Maud has been engaged to Spencer for over six months."

The Major laughed savagely. I could hear his beastly vulgar cachinations all the way to my quarters.

Thank goodness, the horrid women have left. Probably the maiden aunt has come to realise that the sphere of woman's influence has its limitations. The Major and I only speak to each other on matters of duty, and although Mrs. Jepson is always very nice when we meet, there is a tacit understanding that social calls are not expected from me, which, after all, is something to be thankful for. But, as I said before, Olington is an excellent place—to get away from.

D. DALLAS.

A Vicarious Atonement.

PART I.

THE ENIGMA.

AFTER frequent trials it became evident that if I wanted my horses properly attended to I must have some other groom than a native colonist. It is true that in the district in which I lived they had been accustomed to horses from their infancy ; all prospective servants, male and female, rode up on their own " Brumby " ; but their ideas about feeding and grooming a horse did not agree with those I had formed in the old country—and they would not adopt mine.

So I looked out for an " old hand," eventually fixing on one who had had his passage paid by his country.

" What ! " exclaimed my friend Bracey, " do you mean to say you have taken old Francis into your service ? Well, you will wake up some morning with your throat cut ; they could not sheet it home to him, but it is certain it was he who killed Joe Nevin in the hut at One Tree Lagoon."

Not being troubled with nerves or imagination, this did not cause me any anxiety ; and as my horses were now always in good condition, with coats like satin, and the buggy, harness, saddles and bridles in perfect order, I was well contented.

Francis was a handsome old man ; his finely-chiselled features, refined voice and language, and a general air of superiority, made me feel he was born and had lived in a very different sphere to that he now occupied ; at the same time he was deferential without servility—a striking

contrast to the free and easy manners of colonial servants! He was very reserved; for months I could not get him to speak of himself, but one day I tried to lead up to some personal history by saying:

"Francis, I think you must have been in the Cavalry."

He turned pale as death, and an expression of agony on his face made me heartily sorry for my innocent remark. With an effort to steady his voice, he replied:

"Yes; but the past is not always a pleasant thing to dwell upon."

For some days after this he was more silent than ever, and the look of pain remained on his face. Grieved that I should have been the cause of this, I urged that he should unburden his mind by speaking of the past rather than brood over it in silence. I had no desire to pry into his secrets, but by this time he had got to know me well enough to confide in me if he would in anyone.

"Well, sir," he said, "you are the first who has spoken a kind word to me since I left England—the first who has treated me as if I were something better than the scum of the streets; and I own that it would be a relief to talk of my sorrows instead of nursing the bitter memory in the solitude of my own heart."

The outcome of this was that in my study that evening he told me his story, which I give in his own words, changing only the names.

"No one but myself ever knew to the full what I am about to tell; I should not disclose it now but that I feel my time is short, and I should like to clear myself in the eyes of the only being who has treated me with any consideration for the last thirty-five years.

"Besides, you will probably return to England some day, and under certain circumstances there are those to whom I should like you to communicate the facts; you must, therefore, know who I am—or say, rather, who I *was*. My father was the Earl of——, I his second son. There is no need to enter upon the history of my early years; I passed through the usual course of Eton and Oxford without distinguishing myself for good or evil,

and after receiving my degree I obtained a commission in the Dragoons.

“Up to the age of thirty I had kept heart-whole ; there came a day, however, when I met my fate. My fate indeed ! I shall withhold, even from you, the true name ; later on you will see the reason for doing so. I will speak of her simply as ‘Mary,’ which was not her name. We met first at a house-party at —— Castle, my cousin’s place in Clayshire, and from the outset she obtained a complete control over me. Tall, dark, and stately, she was more than queenly—imperial and imperious ; and yet there was another self belonging to her which was tender and winsome. Thrown much together during the week at ——, we became even in that short time more than friends, and before the end of the next season we were engaged. There seemed no reason for postponing the marriage, but Mary would not consent to a date earlier than the following summer.

“Just before Christmas we were staying together at her uncle’s house, when her cousin, Major Merton, unexpectedly returned from India on sick leave. From the time he entered the house Mary’s manner changed ; she had been showing more and more the tender side of her nature, but now became cold, distant, constrained. Indeed, we seldom saw her ; most of the day she passed in her rooms, often excusing herself even from meals, on the plea of being ill.

“Yes, I could see she was unwell, but I did not think it was any physical *malaise*, and I was puzzled and worried about her—all the more so because I was obliged to run up to town for two or three days. My father had persuaded me to leave the army before my marriage, and I had already sent in my papers ; but there were still a few things to settle which could not be left in the hands of the agents.

“I managed a private farewell with Mary, and although, at first, she was unbending, before long she quite broke down. I could see my surmise was right ; it was her mind, not her body, that was ill at ease. When I pressed her to tell me what was distressing her, she

answered that some day she might, but hoped there would be no occasion to do so.

"Being anxious to return to Mary, I hurried through my business, and was able to leave London in time to get back to the Mertons the evening of the day after I had left. There was a hard frost, and no snow on the ground, so I preferred to walk the short distance from the station.

"Thirty-five years ago! and yet I can see everything as plainly as if it were now before my eyes; for, waking and sleeping, it has never left me. The moon was at the full; as I passed through the park gates, the church clock, close by, struck nine. As the drive made a wide sweep up to the house, I took the path through the woods which lay to the left, and had got about half-way to the Hall when, near at hand, I heard the sound of a shot—evidently from a small arm, but it rang loudly in the clear air of the still night.

"As poaching troubles were common in the neighbourhood, I hurried in the direction of the sound, expecting to find the victim, if not the culprit. Only a few yards had to be covered to bring me to a small opening in the wood, and there in the brilliant moonlight I saw—aye, and I see it now!——"

Here the poor fellow, with a groan of anguish, broke off, and it was some time before he could resume.

"I must go on, Sir," Francis at last continued; "it would be no use to have said so much and to leave the rest unsaid; but it is more than difficult to speak of this.

"I had taken no pains to approach quietly, and as I crashed through the underwood the first thing I saw was a female figure disappearing in the direction of the house; in the light, clear almost as day, I could not be deceived—it was Mary! My instant impulse was to follow her, but as I stepped forward there lay, at my very feet, the body of Major Merton; whether alive or dead, I could not tell. Common humanity demanded that I should stay and do what was possible for the man, so stooping over him I searched for the wound. It was not difficult to find; Merton was in evening dress, and on opening

the overcoat, the bullet mark was immediately apparent. From its position it was fairly certain death must have been instantaneous.

"Whilst still kneeling by the body, trying to discover signs of life, there came suddenly upon my ears the sound of footsteps; I suppose I had been too absorbed to hear them sooner. Four gamekeepers entered the glade; after telling them how I had been drawn to the spot, I bade them carry the body to the Hall, while I went on to give forewarning. When I reached the house and had communicated the terrible news to Merton's father, I asked the butler about Mary. He said she had not left her room that day, nor, indeed, since my departure the day before.

"Of course, there had to be an inquest; everybody looked for the verdict of suicide, as Merton's presence in the wood at that hour was not to be accounted for. After I had given my evidence (needless to say I made no mention of having seen any *living* person on the spot), one of the keepers was called, who spoke of hearing the shot and finding me kneeling by the body. Then came evidence, the possibility of which had not occurred to me in the bewilderment of mind events had brought about.

"The Inspector of Police stated that one of his men had just come in and had important evidence. This constable deposed that he had been thinking that no mention had been made of a weapon being found, so he had been searching that morning. On going over the ground systematically, his foot had struck against a pistol lying in the long grass *on the opposite side of the glade*, fully twelve yards from the spot where Merton fell. As the pistol had been discharged at such close quarters as to singe the overcoat, it was plainly no case of suicide.

"The pistol was next produced by the Inspector, a glance was quite sufficient to make me realise my position—it was one of my own, with my initials engraved upon it. The fact that Mary knew I always kept a brace of pistols in my room (we had been discussing the possibility of an attack from a notorious band of burglars) removed

any doubt I might have had as to what line of action I should take. Whilst most strenuously protesting my innocence, I could say nothing to inculpate Mary.

"If it be true that 'Self-preservation is the first law of nature,' then love is above nature; I saw how strong the case appeared against me, but I would face death, even a felon's death, rather than hint at what I knew, alas! to be the truth. Of course, I was arrested on the capital charge, and it is doubtful if anybody thought me guiltless.

"I will pass over the awful time before and during the trial; enough to say that the cleverness of the lawyer in preparing my case, the eloquence of the counsel in arguing it, could not overcome the impression made by the evidence upon the minds of the jury, and sentence of death was passed.

"By this time you will be thinking probably that Mary was unworthy of the sacrifice I was willing to make for her; or wondering, if not, why she had allowed matters to go thus far. On being told of her cousin's death she had swooned, but afterwards had taken her place amongst us again. When, however, she heard of the charge made against me she seemed (I was told) to be deprived of all power except sight, and only passed from that semi-cataleptic state to develop brain fever.

"She never heard of my doom, for on her partial physical recovery the past was mercifully blotted from her memory; although she was always talking of me and daily waiting my return—'He will be back to-morrow' was the constant phrase on her lips. In this state she continued to the time I was transported; and I have had no communication from England since. In my happier moments she is present with me as I heard of her last:—quiet, gentle, loving to those around, and ever saying, 'He will be back to-morrow.' It is better than the scene in the woods!

"I owe my life to the fact it would never have done to hang a man who was nearly related to the Prime Minister and three or four members of the Cabinet; so advantage was taken of the fact that, after all, the evidence was only circumstantial; whilst the absence of any known

motive—the certainty that I had only just arrived by rail, without any previously formed plan to travel by that especial train—my remaining by the murdered man, and so forth—were allowed to weigh in my favour, although not considered strong enough grounds for the granting of a pardon. But then, and ever since, I regretted the death sentence was not carried out, for life has been worse than any death could be.”

Francis stopped as though all was told; but after a short pause I asked if he would mind my putting a question or two.

“Thank you for listening so patiently, sir,” he replied; “I will gladly answer any question I can. Already I feel a load taken off me; the bearing in silence all that I have gone through has, I think, been the hardest part of all.”

“Pray do not answer unless you are inclined to,” I returned, “but I should like to know if you were aware of any reason why ‘Mary’ should kill her cousin?”

“No,” he said; “the secret was hers, and I never tried to fathom it. My confidence in her was such that I was sure she had acted justly; although the world would not allow, did it know the facts, that she had acted *rightly*. In all these years my opinion has not altered—I still am sure she acted justly.”

“But, when you knew that owing to her mental condition she was safe, why did you not let the truth be known?”

Francis started from his seat; the form which the weight of sorrow and suffering had prematurely bent stood erect and noble before me, and his eyes flashed with indignation as he replied:

“Should I be a man to allow a breath of scandal to touch her, when she was unable to speak a word for herself? No! I loved her still; she was mine—I was both able and willing to bear all for her. I had never told her in so many words that I would die for her, but I was willing to do so; yes, and every day these five-and-thirty years I *have* died for her. Knowing, as none other can know, all I have gone through, I would go through it again, twice told, for her!”

I felt abashed before him, and could only murmur—

“Greater love hath no man than this—”

Again there was silence. Then I said :

“I don’t want to know for my own satisfaction, but I should like to hear from your own lips the answer you have to make to the charge brought against you concerning Joe Nevin’s death.”

He smiled rather bitterly as he replied :

“It does seem strange that twice in my life I should have been the first to come across a dead man and be accused of his murder. The fact is, I left him all right in the morning, and when I returned in the evening he was dead—perhaps murdered—but of that I am by no means sure. We were always friendly, but never, of course, ‘friends’ in the proper meaning of the word. At all events, I had no hand in his death. Still, I thank you for acquitting me before hearing my defence.”

Francis afterwards asked me, should I return to England, to see his brother, or the son if the father were dead ; and, if “Mary” was not still living, to relate to him what were the true facts of Major Merton’s death. In order to make it more regular, I got him to make an affidavit. This he consented to do, he explained, not for his own sake, but for the sake of his family, who had suffered so much through the course he felt bound to take in the matter—*bound*, by love, if not by honour.

The rest is soon told. Six months later Francis died. Ever since he had related the story of his life he had been a different man, and I was thankful to be able to soothe his last days, not minding the sneers of some of my neighbours at what they called the quixotic care I took of the dying convict.

A few years after I returned to England.

My old friend’s nephew had recently succeeded to the title, and when I called and informed him I wished to tell him news of his uncle, he refused to hear anything about one who had so blotted the escutcheon of his family.

When at last I got him to listen, he told me “Mary” had died many years ago without regaining her memory,

but still looking for her "noble Francis" to come back to-morrow.

Then I handed him the affidavit, and gave him more fully the story his uncle had confided to me.

At first he was indignant that such shame should have been brought upon his house without cause, as he considered; but afterwards he was fain to confess that his uncle Francis, condemned to death, and respited only to pass the rest of his days amongst criminals or in servitude, had not been the *least* noble of his race.

Indeed, he came to think that instead of being ashamed of him, they had reason to be proud of one who had borne so heroically the burden of shame for the sake of her whom he loved with a love more strong than death.

PART II.

THE SOLUTION.

WHEN in the far-off Australian colony Francis told me the strange story of his life, little did I think the mystery connected with Major Merton's death would ever be solved—and that in a way a novelist would hardly dare to suggest on account of its improbability.

Soon after my return to England—that is to say, about twelve years after Francis had unburdened himself to me—I received word from a firm of lawyers in San Francisco that my presence was desirable in that city. An uncle, with whom I and other members of the family had kept up a desultory correspondence, had of late years settled down in California, after a life spent in wandering over the whole globe. He had recently died, and, for no better reason than that I was named after him, had made me sole executor under his will, and residuary legatee.

The lawyers, with commendable brevity, announced these facts, and requested my presence at as early a date as I could manage; but with a reticence

I did not feel inclined to praise, they said nothing about what my legacy would be likely to realise. For all I knew, it might not be enough to pay my passage both ways—Uncle Ben has seemed the sort of man who would sink his capital in an annuity; certainly in his casual and brief visits to England he had not given us the idea of being by any means wealthy, but rather a cynical and selfish old bachelor.

However, I thought it better to run over and look into matters myself. I had never seen "The Golden Gate," and should like to contrast America with Australia, having a belief that the America of to-day is the Australia of to-morrow.

The morning after my arrival I called on Messrs. Jameson & Black, and after a friendly greeting from the junior partner I begged him to enlighten me on my uncle's affairs.

"Have you not seen the widow yet?" he enquired.

"The widow?—what widow? Whatever do you mean?" I exclaimed, aghast. Surely Uncle Ben, a confirmed old bachelor of eighty-two, had not been inveigled into a marriage on his death-bed!

Mr. Black looked as astonished as I felt; for a time we gazed at one another as though at a loss for words. The lawyer was the first to recover himself, but his reply only increased my amazement, for it was to the effect that he had supposed Mrs. Gardiner had written to me. Then it was my turn to perplex him still further by asking when my uncle was married.

"How can I tell when he married?" he asked rather sharply; "I don't see what that has to do with the matter."

"But we have never heard of a marriage—my uncle certainly never mentioned a wife to me."

"He has been a client of ours for the last fourteen years," responded the lawyer, "and has been married ever since we knew him."

Well! here was a mystery which, apparently, could only be cleared away by Uncle Ben's widow herself; so I applied myself to the business of reading my uncle's will, and finding out what I was to inherit.

The will, drawn up forty years ago, left all he possessed to his wife for life, with reversion to me on her death ; but a codicil bearing date only three years since, left all to me, subject to an ample annuity to his wife. The reason of the alteration was, Mr. Black explained, that my uncle's property had increased in value so much that he thought it required an owner's care ; and the annuity left to his wife exceeded his whole income at the time the original will was made.

What with "town lots" and mining property, I was now a wealthy man, to my great surprise ; but I could not think of that, from the wonder and perplexity created by the discovery that Uncle Ben had been a married man ever since the days of my childhood. The only thing to do was to call on Mrs. Gardiner (I could not yet think of her as my aunt), who was, Mr. Black assured me to my relief, a perfect lady. That afternoon, therefore, I called at her house, pleasantly situated in the suburbs, and evidently the home of a person of refinement. Mrs. Gardiner did not keep me waiting, and a glance told me Mr. Black had spoken the truth—she was a lady in the best meaning of the word. With snow-white hair under her widow's cap, and a face still beautiful, it did not occur to me to debate what her age might be ; she had reached the time of life when a woman is accepted for what she is, when she is either superlatively lovable or entirely indifferent to those who are not of the circle of her family. Mrs. Gardiner's sweet expression, not without its tinge of sadness, must attract everyone who met her ; and notwithstanding the mystery attached to her marriage with my uncle, I was at once prejudiced in her favour. But it became all the more difficult to understand why we had never been told of the marriage, and why my aunt had never accompanied my uncle to England on any of his visits—so far as we knew.

There was, naturally, some embarrassment on my part in speaking of the newly-discovered relationship, so it was a relief when Mrs. Gardiner broached the subject herself, saying—

"The lawyers will have caused surprise, no doubt, by sending you to me as your uncle's widow, but you must not blame them for keeping you in ignorance of my existence. Their letter was written in terms dictated by me, and they were not aware you did not know of your uncle's marriage. I may say at once that the secret of the marriage was kept by my earnest desire—indeed, I stipulated for it from the first; and the reasons being known to my dear husband, he most unwillingly consented. So," with a mournful smile, "you must accept me as a fact. I shall never trouble you or yours, and shall be all the better pleased if you keep my secret still. As your uncle's heir, you were obliged to be admitted into it to some extent, and a letter he wrote for you, shortly before his death, may perhaps satisfy you."

She handed this letter to me, asking me to read it then and there. It was short, and not explicit, simply stating what my aunt had just told me, and urging me to try to make the rest of her days as happy as she had made his.

From this time I accepted Mrs. Gardiner's invitation to stay with her until my business in San Francisco was ended, with the result that we soon became firm friends. It was not difficult to believe Uncle Ben's statement that his wife had made his life happy, for a more perfect disposition it would be impossible to imagine. Even her servants worshipped her—and this in America!

As my home duties would not permit me to be constantly going between England and America, and the greater part of my new inheritance was such as would be all the better for personal supervision, after discussion with the lawyers and my aunt, I determined to dispose of most of it and fund the proceeds; it would diminish the income, but at the same time it would be more secure, and would simplify the management of the property.

In consequence, my stay was prolonged considerably, until at last my wife wrote to threaten me with a visit to look after me.

I begged my aunt to come back to England to make her home with me; I had become so attached to her that

I could not bear to think of leaving her in the solitude caused by her husband's death. But she answered that she could never again set foot in England.

"When you are gone I shall adopt a child," she added, "and with the young life to brighten the house, and the few friends I have made here, I shall be able to pass the days of my waiting. England, however, is impossible for me—the memories connected with it are too sad.

She was so evidently in earnest that it was impossible to urge her further.

Her accounts of the travels with her husband were so interesting that I got her to speak of them evening after evening. They had been off the beaten tracks; well-known places they had visited indeed, but most of the years had been spent in places and amongst people unknown to the ordinary traveller.

"You have no idea how difficult it was to drive your uncle to visit England," she said one day. "For one thing, I never would approach it myself nearer than the French coast and he said he was lost without me. But I would not allow him to lose all home ties for my sake; I knew what it was to have none."

A short time before I brought my business to a close, my aunt asked me to talk more of myself and my affairs. In speaking of my life in Australia I related the story which Francis had confided to me. We were sitting out in the verandah, where the cool air and darkness were a relief after the glare and heat of the day. As I proceeded with the story which had made such an impression upon myself, I thought I heard a stifled sob. "My dear aunt," I exclaimed, "I am afraid I have done wrong in telling you such a mournful tale; I must not go on."

"Indeed, indeed you must," she broke in, "one of the names you mentioned brought back the saddest part of my life; but I must hear the end."

She made no further interruption except a most heart-broken moan at one part of the tale; and when I had ended, she remained silent.

"Come, aunt, it is getting too late for you to stay out

longer. Let us have some music to drive away the sadness of the history of poor Francis," I said after a while.

"Leave me here alone, Ben ; I must think."

Her voice startled me—it was so unlike her own that had I not been sure nobody else was by I should have taken it as a stranger speaking.

"You are ill, aunt ! Do let me take you in," I urged.

"No, Ben, I cannot face the light yet. You have spoken of—of those I knew, of things I knew ; but you have also told me news. I must think."

Still she spoke in an unnatural voice, every syllable produced with difficulty owing to repressed emotion. What could I do ? Only again press her to come in, then leave her in the solitude she asked for. Lingered about, however, when the clock struck for the second time I went and found the housekeeper, begging her to go and bring her mistress in and see that she was properly attended to ; then, after waiting to hear them both come in, I retired to my rooms. Early the next morning a note was brought to me :—"Please do not refer to last night, you shall know more later."

It was the last week before my return to England, so there was much to attend to and I was away all day. When I returned at dinner-time my aunt was much as usual again, except that she was paler and seemed to have lost strength.

Thus things remained until the night before my departure ; when, on saying good-bye, Mrs. Gardiner gave me a package, asking me not to open it until I reached England—"It contains the reasons for my marriage having been a secret in England all these years ; after reading it you will perhaps agree that my request for continued secrecy is reasonable. And now good-bye, dear nephew ; I will not be so selfish as to wish you had no family to draw you back to England, but I shall miss your companionship."

How I wished that I could have taken the dear old aunt to England ! But I had not left before

seeing her suggested plan for her future household carried out. She had adopted two charming children whose parents had been lost in railway accident, and already they were calling her "Grannie" and clinging to her with unaffected love; in Edith and Arthur I was sure she would find the most perfect companionship.

It must be confessed I was constantly perplexing myself over the problem why Uncle Ben had been persuaded to keep his marriage a secret from us all. On the journey to New York there was too much else to occupy my attention, but during the sea passage I suggested many solutions and wove many romances about it—foolish, perhaps, but doing so served at least to wile away some of the hours which drag rather wearily on a liner.

Being, I presume, a son of Eve, before leaving the ship I placed Mrs. Gardiner's package in my handbag, determined to seize the first opportunity to reach the true solution of the mystery.

I was fortunate in securing a compartment to myself in the train. My interest and surprise at what I read would have been difficult to repress even had the carriage been full. Judge for yourselves how great the interest must have been which was excited by the enigma, heightened by the affection for my newly-found aunt, and still further intensified by having so long carried about the key to solve what had puzzled me. As for the surprise—well, again I say, judge for yourselves.

Mrs. Gardiner wrote: "I had thought to carry to the grave the sad secret connected with my life. When my husband died I was left the sole survivor who knew it, and could see no reason for reviving the memory which was beginning to be mellowed by Time's softening touch. But when you came to San Francisco and learned the fact that your uncle had long been married, I began to think that, in justice to his memory, you at least should know why I desired, and he consented, to leave his family in ignorance. As time went on, and you so kindly fell in with my wishes, accepting the relationship so courteously, and, I think I may say, affectionately, I wavered in my resolution to tell you. Candidly, I shrank

from it. Then came the story your old servant had told you—a story which has added a twofold sorrow to my life. Do not, however, blame yourself for telling it; it was impossible you should suppose it would have any more than a general interest for me, and in the strange combination of circumstances I see a fate above human ordering. There was no sleep for me that night, and before morning I made up my mind that I was intended to tell you. I leave it to your discretion—which I feel I can trust—to repeat what I have to tell to others you may think ought to be informed.

“The ‘Mary’ of your tale was my sister—my elder by eight years. Our mother having died when I was two years old, Mary (I will call her so still) was the only ‘mother’ I knew, and most dearly did we love each other. Our father was a stern, morose man, shutting himself out from all society; Mary and I were therefore thrown together, and on our own resources, more than most girls in our position would be. But it was a very happy time; would there had never been a change!

“Mary was well content for herself to remain shut out from the world; but when I was seventeen she told my father she did not intend to let me grow up the soured old maid she was herself; therefore instead of refusing every invitation as hitherto, she should accept all that were worth accepting and take me with her.

“Although only twenty-five, she was really more like a woman of forty-five both in manner and feeling; it was partly the manner either inherited or adopted from our father, and partly from having had put upon her a woman’s cares and responsibilities whilst still a child. For my father had insisted upon her taking the oversight of the establishment as soon as she was fourteen, saying she was tall enough, and that he hated useless women. So we began going out, though we were so much happier in each other’s company that we would rather have continued as before; but Mary would not listen to my entreaties—it was not right, she said, that I should be cooped up and live without any brightness in my life.

“One of the first houses we stayed at was the Mertons’.

Captain Merton was at home on furlough, and as we had seen something of him formerly, owing to our cousinship, in my bashfulness I was more inclined to pair off with him than anyone else. He was a handsome and agreeable man, and I soon became sincerely attached to him. He also appeared to be fond of me, openly showing his preference. Again and again he managed to be staying at the same house with us, and was unceasing in his attention to me.

"His furlough had nearly expired ; so when, early in March, he proposed, and I accepted him, it was only to be expected that he should wish to have the marriage take place at once, that I might go out to India with him. This I shrank from, for the idea of leaving Mary (and leaving her alone), was not supportable ; until brought face to face with it I had not realised that marriage meant separation from her. Of course, she overruled my objections ; my father, moreover (who seemed daily more silent and morose), insisted upon the marriage taking place at once.

"So, just after Easter, we were married, leaving for India a fortnight later. Captain Merton promised we should soon be back in England, and talked about selling out unless there was the chance of purchasing a step soon. Instead of going by the overland route, we made the voyage by the Cape, on account of Captain Merton's health ; with pleasant company and weather it was not an unhappy time, indeed, the shipboard life was probably the best way to heal the sorrow of a separation from Mary.

"For some months after landing in Bombay matters went well enough ; then, suddenly, Captain Merton's conduct changed. He left the house for parade one morning in his usual spirits, but on his return he was gloomy and nervous, starting at the slightest sound. I feared he was ill, but he declared there was nothing the matter—it was all my fancy. At the same time he became uneven in temper, treating me generally with a harshness of which he had shown no symptom before, and yet at times he was more gentle than ever. This continued some four weeks.

"One morning the ayah came to say an Englishwoman wanted to see me on business. She was shown in—a rather nice-looking woman of the lower middle-class apparently. On my enquiring what she wished to see me about, she sank into a chair, and gave way to a violent flood of tears. Begging her to control herself, I assured her that if she was in distress I would do all in my power assist her.

"I will not repeat all that passed when she was at last able to speak; the terrible facts are sufficiently stated in few words.

"She was the only child of a shopkeeper in Dover, and when Captain Merton had been quartered there had made his acquaintance.

"As I said before, he was handsome and agreeable. It is no wonder then that the poor girl lost her heart to him, and was persuaded by him to consent to a secret marriage—in proof of which she showed me the certificate. When the regiment was ordered to India, Captain Merton made her remain in England, and promised to send for her later on; but his letters became less frequent, and eventually ceased altogether.

"Her father's death left her alone in the world; so, finding Captain Merton's regiment was still in India, she determined to sell her business and join him. A month ago she had arrived, and awaited Captain Merton on the parade ground. He had been intensely angry, she said, at his following him; but had obtained a small bungalow in which he placed her, making her promise to keep herself quiet, as he said he could not possibly present her as his wife. It was not until the day before that she had heard that he already had another home and a wife in Bombay; therefore she had come to see if she were a wife or not. Her grief on entering, she said, was for me, seeing me 'such a child,' for she knew then that though both were wronged, the wrong to me was the more grievous.

"I need not enter upon my feelings. For the time I was calm and strong, and I made the woman remain to face Captain Merton. He is dead; I have tried to for-

give him as I would be forgiven, so I will not say more of the scene which followed, beyond that he could neither deny the marriage when at Dover nor excuse his mock marriage with me — except that he said he ‘thought the woman was dead.’ I told him that to spare my reputation in the eyes of the world I would only ask him to tell one more untruth; I would go away, and he must shortly give out that I was dead. I claimed from him my marriage portion, which was sufficient to enable me to live quietly in any place I might decide upon; then, leaving the house, I never saw him again.

“To Mary I wrote the truth, binding her to silence, adding the request that my death might be asserted since I was henceforth dead to them all, for none would ever hear of me or from me again.

“That letter, I need not say, I now bitterly regret, but how could I foresee the consequences? There had been the taint of insanity in our family for generations; my father’s gloominess could only be regarded as an undeveloped form of the acute mania which had shown itself in his father and brother amongst others, and there can be no doubt poor Mary’s mind was unhinged by the sight of Major Merton. For two years she must have been brooding over the tragedy of my life, so it would not be surprising that the presence of her sister’s betrayer should upset the balance of her mind. She must have sought the interview with him—he did not know I had written to her—with the sole purpose of playing the part of avenger; so her noble lover’s conclusion that she had acted ‘justly’ must be accepted to some extent, since to her diseased brain it would appear as an act of justice. God grant them both pardon; and if one man can expiate the sin of another, surely Mary’s sin was expiated by the willing sacrifice of Francis!

“I will add only a word or two at present about my marriage with your uncle. I returned to Europe and settled down in an out of the way village in Normandy. There in the course of one of his rambles your uncle met me: he told me afterwards that the minute he saw me he determined to make me his wife. At all events

he remained some time at the inn and was so persistent in meeting me that I gave up going outside my garden. He was not to be daunted, however, for he boldly came in and asked me to marry him. I was not in love with him, so I refused him rather curtly. About six months later he came back again, telling me he could not do without me, and begged most humbly to be allowed to visit me in the hope that I might get to tolerate him.

"Of course, I felt bound then to give him my history, thinking that would end the affair; instead of that he became the more urgent in his suit. The end you know; but you cannot know the love and tenderness he lavished upon me in the long years we were allowed to pass together."

Here Mrs. Gardiner's letter finished, and thus were solved at the same time the two greatest mysteries that it had been my lot to be acquainted with—Major Merton's death and my Uncle Ben's marriage.

CLIFFORD MOUNTENEY.

To Othmar.

What would you with me? I could not foresee,
And Fate hath riven the chains twixt you and me
Our faith was shivered by the gods' decree.

Yea, the old weir is clear—and clear the tree—
Dropping slant shadows on our gipsy tea
While the wind smote us in wild revelry.

We talked of Love and Plato, bent the knee
At Swinburne's shrine,—flouted Philosophy :
We thought, poor fools, of the anoint were we.

Alas! we've sorrowed much and bitterly—
Be our's Love's pain and not his ecstasy.
What matters it? Each hath his weird to dree.

Friend, I thank God for this—that you may be
Ever my friend to all Eternity.

LILY SAUNDERS.

The Stage.

FOR this month the chronicle of the stage would be a tale of conclusions. It is the last nights of this, and the last weeks of the other. Many are gone already with or without remembrance left behind. Poor *Melisande* has ceased to be unhappy because of the contrariness of the things of this world and her critics; also because they did not know what to say of her or how to play for safety. It is so awkward dealing with something new that you would like to go for, but are not quite certain whether you really understand. Outside the ordinary ruck we had one man recommending a preliminary course of the pictures of the late Sir E. Burne-Jones; another seemed to think that more suitable preparation was a school performance of a Greek play; a third, to show that he really did know all about it, made careful allusions to the Paris representation behind a curtain of gauze. And so in spite of the desire to be cleverly appreciative, they managed to be hardly complimentary to the author, or the players, or to both.

At the Savoy the "Beauty Stone" has just gone down, and there seems no better stopgap provided than to bring back "The Gondoliers." And so on, Ambassadors, Liars, French Maids, Little Ministers, and Wandering Tramps are alike smitten—in fact, the slaughter effected behind the footlights by General July is only to be equalled by that of General January on the plains of Moscow. As for the opera, it has suddenly started on the production of novelties, an eleventh hour kind of action that is only explicable as the result of the general upset of the established order of things caused by the mid-season incursion of all Valhalla and the race of the Völsung. But of this, and nearly all else, before

BELGRAVIA is in the hands of its readers the doom will be pronounced: Too late, ye cannot enter now. For, in truth, what has been happening is a period of short seasons. Sir Henry Irving has fled to the provinces, and yet has seldom gone so very far further than could be reached from the Lyceum in a hansom, and his boards have been occupied by M. Coquelin in a big nose. Whether one goes to see M. Coquelin, or "Cyrano de Bergerac," is a little uncertain, although for the out-and-out admirers of M. Rostand there is nothing too heavy. One, for instance, seems to put him above all French dramatists, living or dead, and all but one English, and even then it might be suspected that the concession of Shakspeare as a possible superior is a mere politeness to a national superstition. A little excessive it may be judged, and the wise man waits to see whether Sir Henry Irving will give us "Cyrano" in translation next year. Our insular ideas at present are all for stichomythia and "conversations," and an epigram here and there does no harm. Failing that, action. Do something, anything, rather than explain your feelings in long speeches. It may not be poetic, but it is our way. But it is not Cyrano's, at least, in the play. As for the visit of Mdle. Sarah Bernhardt, no one pretends it is not the actress that one goes to see. "Frou-Frou," "La Dame aux Camélias," and their sisters, what are they but relics of a Paris that is forgotten, and a France that has changed out of all recognition?

But the main invasion has been not of French, but Americans, and this is a serious one, for the design is a definite occupation. They, at any rate some of them, come to stay. One would not say anything unkind of the Americans—they have just discovered that we are their long-lost brothers; moreover, they have given us the "Cat and the Cherub," which was one thing new under the sun.

To produce a new play in the middle of July, to all appearance not for a "season," but for a run, argued considerable confidence. Consequently, as the actual first production at Watford was known only to the very few

it seemed reasonable to anticipate anything of "The Vicar's Dilemma," which was the piece chosen for the re-appearance of Mr. Thomas Thorne at Terry's.

"The Playgoer" on this occasion, as on others, did not do his playgoing on the first night, and therefore did not have the opportunity of seeing what manner of man a vicar's son may be. But his entirely new and original character comedy is in plain language a farce. It has been sufficiently hardly spoken of in the dailies. Really, like the curate's egg, there are parts of it that are good. It is a curiously unequal piece of work, and it would be rash to assign to it a long life. Mr. Thorne is, of course, Mr. Thorne, and would make quite a presentable country parson if his author had given him better words. One cannot help admiring the manner in which Miss Lucie Milner retains her vivacity all through what must be a terribly uphill task. The artistic consciousness with which she gets the last ounce out of her rather hopeless work makes one wish her a more sympathetic part. Mr. Kevin Gunn, Mr. Gilmore, and Miss Thorne do all that can be done under the circumstances, and more than might be expected. If Mr. Righton is less satisfactory it is probably because no one in the world, himself included, has any idea what he really is supposed to represent.

There is nothing more in July from

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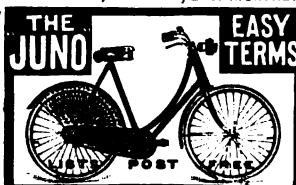
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Fashion Notes.

THE great event of the season has been the Press Bazaar. As a contemporary has wittily said, "The newspapers have been collecting duchesses, duchesses have been collecting actresses, actresses have been collecting smiles, and their smiles have been collecting money." And the great result of all this has been a net sum of £12,000 for the London Hospital, within whose sheltering walls all the best medical science and skill is devoted to relieving the sufferings of the very poor. The originator and Hon. Secretary of the Bazaar, Mrs. Spender, wife of the editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, must congratulate herself and her coadjutor, Mr. Rudolf Birnbaum, on their splendid success.

The crowd was unprecedented, and for some hours it was almost impossible to move. The only way was to stand still with one's back against something firm, and wait. Even the Duke of Cambridge shared the general fate, and was caught in the moving mass, literally unable to get into the Hall. He was not recognised at all at first, and very nearly had to turn back, so difficult did the officials find it to make room for him.

The Princess of Wales, looking extremely well in spite of the heat, opened the Bazaar, accompanied by the Duchess of York. Her Royal Highness made a complete round of the Hall, and seemed thoroughly to enjoy her numerous and varied purchases. These included, one of Mr. Carruthers Gould's cleverest cartoons from Mrs. Spender at the *Westminster Gazette* Stall; a signed copy of Zola's "Le Rêve," from *Black and White*; a charming Empire fan mounted on carved ivory sticks from *The Lady*; a signed copy of Helen Mathers' new novel, "Bam Wildfire," from the *Financial News*, with many others too numerous to mention.

The Stalls were draped in yellow and white, giving a most artistic effect, the exception to the general scheme of colour being that of the *Morning Post* at the foot of the staircase. Here Lady Tweedmouth presided over flowers in a lovely gown of green and white silk. The name of the paper was in dark flowers on a background of snowy white, and the decoration of the stall was asparagus fern and salmon picotees. The Princess purchased some rare orchids here.

The Queen sold old silver and other art treasures, and was presided over by Princess Edward of Saxe Weimar, aided by Lady Falkland, Lady Duncannon and others.

Lady Newnes had dainty leather goods, and her stall had the satisfaction of knowing that whatever they made there would be Sir George's generous cheque for £1000 to add to the profits.

At the *Graphic* Stall, the wives of the principal Academicians sold pictures, engravings, and etchings of various celebrated works, and here a picture by Luke Fildes realised £150.

Among other unique objects for sale, was the Pope's contribution to the *Tablet* Stall. This was a lovely cameo, in a jewelled setting, which sold for fifty guineas.

The London Hospital itself had a large stall of clothing, and was attended by its own blue-clad nurses, twelve of whom formed a bodyguard for the Princess as she went round the Hall.

Everyone in London seemed to put in an appearance at the Bazaar, even if only for an hour or so, and those at the Stalls did not spare themselves in any way. Lady Warwick was only able to be there on the second day, but was connected with two stalls. Lady Granby was in pale muslin with a soft sash and a drooping Leghorn hat. The Duchess of Abercorn had a very smart blue and white foulard, the pattern, a trail of pink roses, while her bonnet was of cornflower blue. The Duchess of Sutherland looked charming in heliotrope, with a dainty square chemisette of white lace and satin, and a big black hat.

Too much praise cannot be given to the entertainments. The Princess attended the first, but all were equally good. As usual, the utmost generosity in giving their services was shown by all our best artistes, while many of them, in addition, were working hard at the Stalls. Mr. Acton Bond had the entertainments in his hands, and nothing could have been better organised. The programme for the Princess consisted of "Sixes and Sevens," a brilliant duologue between Mr. Arthur Bouchier and Miss Violet Vanbrugh; "Dagonet" by Mr. Beerbohm Tree, followed by special request of the Princess, by Sir Henry Irving in "Gemini et Virgo," and Goddard's delightful "Dites-moi, Belle Chanteuse," sung delightfully by Miss Marie Tempest.

Among the artistes assisting at the Stalls were Miss Marion Terry, charmingly dressed, Miss Julia Neilson in dark blue, Miss Lily Hanbury in a picture hat with white plumes, Miss Evelyn Millard in white muslin with delicate lace insertions, Miss Ellen Terry, very striking in black and white, and others too numerous to name.

Mrs. George Alexander was the fortunate winner, in one of the raffles, of a delightful satin table centre.

Altogether there cannot have been a more successful undertaking, The Bazaar Guide Book and Souvenir, a beautiful

production, rose immediately in price from its nominal one of five shillings to that of one guinea, so great was the demand.

Cold East winds have been with us for so long that it was quite a pleasure to be able to don one's lightest things for the 'Varsity match, without fear of being half frozen. The weather was perfect with the exception of one shower on the first day, and nearly 40,000 visitors must have passed through the turnstiles.

The improvement in the ground at Lords has given a greater space all round, and it makes a pleasant change to be able to have a chair comfortably on the piece of lawn near the luncheon tents, and watch everyone passing round.

Many interesting people were to be seen. Lord Londesborough had his coach next the Pavilion, and there were a good number of others in the coach enclosure. Lord Coventry was accompanied by his daughter, Princess Victor Dhuleep Singh, in pale grey silk with "motifs" (that is the latest term) of cream lace. Viscount Cross and the Keeper of the Regalia, General Sir Hugh Gough, also escorted their daughters. Mr. A. J. Balfour was there for most of the day, and in the Pavilion were Lord Jersey, Lord Ancaster, Lord George Hamilton, Lord

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Harris, and other ex-presidents of the M.C.C. Lady Leitrim sat with her striking daughter, who was in a quaint costume of pink and grey. While a handsome Indian lady wore native silk robes in shades of blue.

The general impression left upon one was of lovely soft frocks, shady hats (Leghorn or black lace), drooping plumes, and roses or carnations. The elder women affected the smart glacé foulards so much in vogue just now. One of the most noticeable was of white with sprays of ruby colour, and it had a dainty white chiffon chemisette embroidered in rubies and turquoises, lovely in its effect,

The Caledonian Ball is always a beautiful sight, but this year it seems to have eclipsed all former occasions. There were six eightsome reels, the men being in full Highland dress, and the ladies in white ball frocks with sashes of the tartan of their families.

Not only do people give their names as patronising this great annual Charity Ball, but they are generally present in person, and the Whitehall Rooms were crowded to their fullest extent this year. Such coupling of names as Lord Dunmore and Lady Catherine Scott, Captain Fraser and Lady Clementine

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Mr. De Vere Barrow, aided by Mrs. Helen Trust and M. Desider Nimes, gave a successful Morning Concert at Steinway Hall, on June 28th.

Mr. De Vere Barrow at once established himself as a favourite by his skilful interpretation of "Kinderseenen" (Schumann), but proved himself at his best in two Etudes and two Polonaises by Chopin, his rendering showing complete sympathy between composer and performer. We hope to hear more of this gifted pianist.

Mrs. Helen Trust was responsible for three songs charmingly rendered, and M. Desider Nimes gave a spirited "Fantasie" (Faust), Gounod-Sarasate, besides being associated with Mr. Barrow in Beethoven's Sonata in F major, for pianoforte and violin.

BELGRAVIA.

AUGUST, 1898.

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Hay, Viscount Fincastle and Lady Helen Stuart Murray, Lord Kilmarnock and the Countess of Cromartie, Lord Lovat and Lady Victoria Murray, carry one back to the old days of the Scottish Court at Holyrood.

Many of the clan badges, such as sprigs of oak, clusters of ivy, an acorn or two, were worn in the hair with the diamonds.

The Sales are with us once more, and such Sales! If only we could be sure that August and September would bring weather to make up for what we have suffered hitherto, what bargains the shops would yield. Entrancing silks and muslins meet us at every turn, and by their absurd cheapness clamour for consideration. How can it be waste to buy this or that, even if we do not require it, when at any other time it would be twice the price?

But without being foolish there *are* a few things it is never a mistake to invest in. Remnants of good lace are a sensible purchase, and a good skirt can easily be utilised into a smart out-of-door, dinner, or reception gown by use of some good lace and chiffon to form the bodice. Again, a little black lace coat over a white chiffon shirt, or a cream lace coat over a black chiffon shirt, either of these worn with a good silk or fine cashmere skirt will make a smart frock.

Henley showed us many beautiful frocks and some most unsuitable ones. One of the most charming I saw was worn by a girl whose superb punting was the admiration of everyone. She wore a gown of white flannel with a small black stripe in it, the bodice made blouse fashion with a collar of lace guipure, and a scarlet hat and waistband.

A lovely frock on one of the lawns was of white muslin with a lovely design of true lover's knots in black lace. The skirt was the narrow bell shape, almost as full as a frill at the bottom. The bodice fastened at the left side with a frill and three large rosettes of *pervenche* blue, the hat was of blue chiffon with white wings.

A very smart gown for the late summer is of blue and white check, with plain blue cloth jacket, tabbed. The hat for this should be of blue straw with cherries. Cherries, for some unknown reason, are the smart thing this season. As they are a very expensive decoration, they are not likely to appear much in the streets, I am glad to say.

A new summer dish has been recommended to me. Place some good strawberries in a deep silver bowl or china dish; saturate them with brandy; cover with thick whipped cream, sweetened to taste; ice the whole. The result is quite a novelty.

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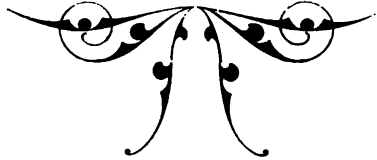
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